

E/CN.3/1995/CRP.1  
17 February 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
Twenty-eighth session  
27 February-3 March 1995  
Item 16 of the provisional agenda\*

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS AND RELATED MATTERS

Proposed programme of work of the Statistical Division  
for the biennium 1996-1997 and related information

Note by the Secretariat

---

\* E/CN.3/1995/1.

95-04865 (E)



/...

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION .....	1	3
I. FORMAT OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK .....	2 - 3	3
II. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK IN STATISTICS FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 .....	4 - 27	3
<u>Subprogramme 1</u> : Developing statistical concepts and methods for use by Member States .....	7 - 10	4
<u>Subprogramme 2</u> : Applying advanced technology in collecting, processing and disseminating integrated statistics .....	11 - 14	6
<u>Subprogramme 3</u> : Collecting, compiling and disseminating international statistics .....	15 - 19	8
<u>Subprogramme 4</u> : Coordinating international statistical programmes .....	20 - 23	9
<u>Subprogramme 5</u> : Support for technical cooperation in statistics and statistical data processing .....	24 - 27	11

## INTRODUCTION

1. The proposed programme of work contained in the present document has not yet been reviewed by the Budget Division of the Secretariat and is subject to change in the light of the Budget Division's review of the relevant submissions for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and of the Secretary-General's decisions on the proposed programme budget. The Secretary-General's programme budget is to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session for consideration and approval.

### I. FORMAT OF PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK

2. The United Nations operates under a series of six-year medium-term plans. The years 1996-1997 are the last biennium of the present medium-term plan. The Secretary-General has determined that substantive changes in the plans will not be allowed until the next plan. Therefore the format of the proposed programme of work is the same as it was at the last session of the Commission - that is, it is organized by subprogramme. The five subprogrammes of the statistics programme are as follows: 1, Developing statistical concepts and methods for use by Member States; 2, Applying advanced technology in collecting, processing and disseminating integrated statistics; 3, Collecting, compiling and disseminating international statistics; 4, Coordinating international statistical programmes; and 5, Support for technical cooperation in statistics and statistical data processing.

3. A number of Secretariat-wide and Department-wide initiatives are also expected to have a substantial impact on the Statistical Division's work programme in 1996-1997. These include the modernization of management and administrative policies, structures and procedures and the further development of computing and telecommunications systems, methods and processes. It is also anticipated that the Statistical Division will make major contributions to these initiatives within the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis.

### II. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK IN STATISTICS FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

4. The overall objective of the programme, as set out in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (A/47/6/Rev.1), is to ensure the availability and to promote the use of relevant and timely statistics of high quality for national and international economic and social policy monitoring, analysis and action. The programme covers activities to develop and implement standard statistical concepts and methods, collect and disseminate international statistics, promote coordination and support technical cooperation in the global statistical system. These activities include basic statistical and methodological work in national accounts, international merchandise trade, commodity production, energy, population and human settlements, environment, prices, the role of women, social indicators and special population groups, and general integrated databases.

5. During the biennium 1996-1997, the programme will, inter alia, respond to new international statistical requirements which are essential for the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) and for social statistics and indicators necessary to the follow-up of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Adoption of the 1993 SNA was a significant event that was made possible by the contributions of a number of international agencies and individual national statistical offices. The last revision of the national accounts structure for countries occurred in 1968, twenty-seven years ago. One of the major problems with the previous revision was the lack of implementation. This resulted in disparate, non-compatible and often non-comparable national accounts among countries. To prevent this from occurring, the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1993/5, recommended that countries adopt the 1993 SNA as the international standard for the compilation of their national accounts statistics and urged countries and international organizations to mobilize the necessary resources for the implementation of the new system.

6. There is an increasing need for reporting on individual country statistics - particularly in the social arena. This trend is expected to continue with action programmes adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995). The statistics programme is responsible for providing guidelines on the collection and development of social statistics and indicators for measuring and monitoring social concerns. It also advises international agencies on the correct statistical procedures to ensure that data collected is accurate. The Statistical Division also serves as a liaison between national statistical offices and international agencies. In addition, the statistics programme will also follow up on the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to further develop and standardize the concepts and methods of integrated environmental and economic accounting, and indicators of sustainable development.

Subprogramme 1: Developing statistical concepts  
and methods for use by Member States

7. The objectives of subprogramme 1, as stated in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, are: (a) to develop and disseminate sound concepts, definitions, classifications and methods of data collection, compilation and dissemination for national and international statistics; (b) to promote the improvement of national and international statistics, particularly their reliability, timeliness, scope, coverage and comparability; and (c) to promote the further harmonization and integration of national and international statistics.

8. During the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995, the revised System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) was completed. Following the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, concepts and methods, environmental indicators and integrated environmental and economic accounting were developed. In support of the International Conference on

Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, a number of social indicators were selected, developed, compiled and disseminated. In addition, work was undertaken to further develop and harmonize international economic classifications; statistics on international trade, industry, services, and prices. Work was also undertaken in the areas of civil registration, vital statistics, population census, housing statistics, social statistics and statistics of special population groups (i.e., children, youth, the ageing and the disabled).

9. In the biennium 1996-1997, the programme will give priority to the implementation of the 1993 SNA in all countries, in close collaboration with the regional commissions and other members of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts. Work will also continue on the development and harmonization of environment statistics, environmental indicators, and integrated environmental and economic accounting. The further development and harmonization of international economic classifications, international trade statistics, industrial statistics, energy statistics, price statistics, service statistics, civil registration and vital statistics and statistics on special population groups, such as children, youth, the ageing and the disabled, will continue. Attention will be given to statistical requirements arising from the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995).

10. Activities of subprogramme 1:

Parliamentary services

(a) Parliamentary documentation (including official records): reports to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session (1997) and on the progress of activities in such areas as national accounts, environment, energy, industrial, price, international trade, demographic and social statistics, international migration, gender, classifications, international comparisons and technical cooperation (approximately 12 reports, 1996); report to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on development of women's human rights indicators (1996 and 1997); report to the Commission on the Status of Women on the use of gender statistics (1996);

(b) Substantive services: Intergovernmental Working Group on the Advancement of Environment Statistics (1996; 1997); technical papers for the Committee on Contributions on price-adjusted rates of exchange (PARE), and alternative income concepts (1996 and 1997);

(c) Ad hoc expert groups and related preparatory work: (six) ad hoc expert groups: on the interface between decennial censuses and individual rights (1997); on preparation of a trial classification of activities for time-use statistics (1997); on links between business and national accounts standards (1996); on analytical and policy uses of national and satellite accounts (1996); on international classifications (1996); on social accounting matrices (1997).

Published material

(a) Recurrent publication: Compendium of International Classifications on CD-ROM (1996);

(b) Non-recurrent publications: Trial classification of activities for time-use statistics (1997); trial system of social indicators for social reporting and monitoring the achievement of social goals (1997); concepts and definitions for international trade statistics (1997); manual on the concepts and methods of environmental indicators (1997); training manual on integrated environmental and economic accounting based on country experience (1996); Revised Recommendations on International Migration Statistics, Series M, No. 58/Rev.1 (1997) (joint publication of the Statistical Division and EUROSTAT); Manual on Computerization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (1996); Handbook of Population and Housing Censuses, Part V, Economic Characteristics (1996); Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods, vol. I, Series F, No. 35 (in Arabic) (1996); Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods, vol. II, Series F, No. 35 (in Arabic) (1996); Handbook on Analytical and Policy Uses of National Accounts (1996); Handbook on the Links between Business and National Accounting Standards (1996); Technical Report on Human Resource Accounting (1996);

(c) Technical material: Report on country practices in international trade statistics (1996); preparation of International Comparison Programme (ICP) technical documents for participating countries and regional organizers of the 1993 comparison (1996, 1997); monitoring developments in the regional comparisons and preparing the paper "Current status of the ICP" periodically (1996, 1997); study on integrated environmental and economic regional accounting (1997); report on the development of Classification of Products by Purpose (COPP) (1996); report on development of the revision of the Central Product Classification (CPC) (1996); studies on concepts and methods of selected areas of environmental accounting (1996, 1997); technical papers on international trade and other issues in service statistics (1996; 1997); technical papers on conceptual issues in national and satellite accounting and analysis (1996, 1997); technical papers on environmental statistics and accounting issues for technical meetings. (1996, 1997); development of the revised commodity list containing product definitions for use in the field of industrial production statistics (1997); correspondence tables between Classifications (1996); index of International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) and other classifications (1996); report of the Expert Group Meeting on the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme (1996).

Subprogramme 2: Applying advanced technology in collecting, processing and disseminating integrated statistics

11. Objectives of the subprogramme as stated in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, are (a) to disseminate multisectoral statistics and indicators, periodically, at the international level, efficiently and effectively through recurrent publications containing general economic, demographic and social statistics; (b) to disseminate international statistics and indicators 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 databases.

12. During the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995, cost effective methods and systems for collecting, assessing, compiling and disseminating data were developed using, in particular, new technologies for preparing major databases. New technologies were also applied to the improvement of the quality of the data, its timeliness, publication and ready accessibility to users.

13. In the biennium 1996-1997, the orientation of the subprogramme will be (a) to continue to give priority to developing cost-effective methods and systems for collecting, assessing and compiling data and their dissemination, using new technologies for preparing major databases, publications and other statistical outputs, with particular emphasis on using new technologies to improve timeliness in reaching users and the quality of data presented; and (b) to develop new databases to meet the growing need for multisectoral and integrated statistics and indicators, drawing on ongoing work under subprogramme 3 in individual fields of statistics and on related work in other international organizations. Work in this subprogramme will contribute to and benefit from the development of the new United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS), developed by the Department in cooperation with the regional commissions.

14. Activities of subprogramme 2:

Parliamentary services

One ad hoc expert group meeting on development of advanced user access and output systems for statistical databases in UNESIS (1996).

Published material

(a) Recurrent publications: two issues of the Statistical Yearbook in print and CD-ROM formats (1996 and 1997); 24 issues of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics in print format and continuously updated for user access through an on-line subscription service (1996 and 1997); two issues of World Statistics in Brief: United Nations Statistical Pocketbook in print, diskette and on-line formats (1996 and 1997);

(b) Technical material: comprehensive statistical data on integrated operational activities (1996 and 1997); development of client-server databases in the framework of UNESIS (1996 and 1997); development of new methods for data collection from Member States (1996 and 1997); development and maintenance of the Statistical Division's data processing and desktop publishing systems, completed installation of the Division's LAN client-server and external communications systems (1996 and 1997); systems support for development and maintenance of primary Statistical Division's databases (1996 and 1997).

Subprogramme 3: Collecting, compiling and disseminating international statistics

15. The objective of the subprogramme is to contribute to the formulation of national and international policy and decision-making by fostering the availability and use of relevant, comprehensive, timely, reliable and comparable international statistics.

16. During the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995, specialized databases such as COMTRADE, women, and disability were strengthened. In addition, major efforts were undertaken to ensure the availability of more comprehensive and comparable economic and demographic data for developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

17. In the biennium 1996-1997, attention will be given to improving timeliness, quality and relevance of statistical outputs in all areas of statistics and reducing the response burden on national statistical offices by joining with other international organizations in joint and/or integrated questionnaires and data sharing. In the area of national accounts, efforts will be made to convert the database and to develop a new streamlined questionnaire based on the 1993 SNA. In the area of trade statistics, existing specialized databases will be strengthened and special attention will be given to the COMTRADE database for international trade statistics.

18. Special efforts will also be made to ensure the availability of more comprehensive and comparable data for developing and transitional countries. Cooperation will be strengthened with developing countries and countries in transition, and international organizations to obtain comprehensive commodity trade statistics for inclusion in the COMTRADE database. International data collection on environmental statistics will commence. The subprogramme will continue to meet the statistical needs of a wide range of international users. In the area of industrial statistics, cooperation will be strengthened among the Statistical Division, UNIDO and OECD in the collection, processing and dissemination of data on industrial statistics.

19. Activities of subprogramme 3:

Parliamentary services

Parliamentary documentation (including official records): document on national income and related statistics (1997), to be presented to the Committee on Contributions.

Published materials

(a) Recurrent publications: Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics (1996 and 1997); Energy Statistics Yearbook, 1994 (annual, 1996); Energy Statistics Yearbook, 1995 (annual, 1997); Energy Balances and Electricity Profiles, 1994 (biennial, 1996); International Trade Statistics Yearbook, vols. I and II, 43rd and 44th editions (1996 and 1997); Commodity Trade Statistics, Series D (1996 and 1997); microfiches of international trade statistics (1996 and 1997); Demographic Yearbook, 46th edition (1996);

/...



Demographic Yearbook, 47th edition (1997); Population and Vital Statistics Report (quarterly) (1996 and 1997); Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook, 1994 (1996), 1995 (1997); Compendium of Human Settlement Statistics (joint publication of the Statistical Division and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (1996);

(b) Technical material: Database of Environmental Indicators (1997) (pending approval by the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission); recurrent analytical tables based on the national accounts data bank (1996 and 1997); conversion of national accounts databank to the 1993 SNA format (1996); national accounts questionnaire on diskette; data compilation for the Committee on Contributions (1996 and 1997); improvement of software for the compilation of national accounts statistics (1996); update of GDP database (1996 and 1997); provision of energy information on computer tapes, diskettes, and printouts to users (1996 and 1997); update of existing mainframe and microcomputer databases in the field of international trade (1996 and 1997); expanded coverage, including data according to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) and improved quality and timeliness in compilation of international trade statistics in the COMTRADE database (1996 and 1997); improved compilation/estimation of trade by commodity and partner country (1996 and 1997); substantive input into development of a new microcomputer graphical interface for the COMTRADE database (1996 and 1997); work on maintaining and improving the coverage and quality of database on price/unit value and quality indexes of aggregate trade and matrices of international trade (1996 and 1997); responses to ad hoc requests from Member States and other users for technical information on trade statistics (1996 and 1997); statistical information on provision of computer tapes, diskettes, tabulations and other types of information from statistical databases on international trade statistics (1996 and 1997); collecting, compiling, evaluating and disseminating statistics on prices, including comprehensive and comparable data on purchasing-power parities and real product, on diskettes and hard copies as well as ad hoc compilation of data; processing the replies to the Standardized International Reporting of Military Expenditures to conform to standard statistical practices, as requested by the Office for Disarmament Affairs; responses to ad hoc requests on prices, including data from previous ICP phases and current estimates of purchasing power: letters, typed tables and diskettes (1996-1997); adaptation of the United Nations Energy Statistics Questionnaire to the harmonized joint questionnaire of IEA/OECD/EUROSTAT/ECE and the Statistical Division (1996); development of the questionnaire on commodity production statistics based on the revised product list.

Subprogramme 4: Coordinating international  
statistical programmes

20. The objectives of the subprogramme are to facilitate the use of the international statistical recommendations and classifications of different international organizations; and to achieve an integrated system in the collection, processing and dissemination of international statistics.

21. During the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995, major efforts were made in the coordination of the global statistical system and the provision of services

/...

to statistical authorities through the regular sessions of the Statistical Commission, the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

22. In accordance with the action plan for strengthening international statistical cooperation adopted by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session, the subprogramme will give high priority to the work on the coordination of the global statistical system and provision of services to national statistical offices. The subprogramme will make use of continuing instruments of coordination, such as the Statistical Commission, its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, inter-secretariat working groups in individual fields, the recently established task forces on selected areas of statistics, and ongoing consultations and exchange of information and plans, as well as ad hoc consultations and meetings on subjects and issues of current concern. In addition, statistical services will continue to be provided to the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies on request.

23. Activities of subprogramme 4:

Parliamentary services

(a) Parliamentary documentation (including official records): reports to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session on the draft work programme of the Statistical Division for 1998-1999 (1996); medium-term plan (1996); performance report for the biennium 1995-1996 (1996); updated information on the work of the Statistical Division (1996); plans of international organizations in the field of statistics (1996); overall review of the statistical work of international organizations (1996); coordination of statistical data collection (1996); eighteenth session of Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination (1996); three reports to the Statistical Commission's Working Group at its nineteenth session; inventory of statistical data collection activities (1997); outlines of reports for the Commission at its thirtieth session; task forces on coordination in specific subject-matter areas (1997); and other items of special interest which might be decided by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session, in 1997 (1997);

(b) Substantive services: the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission (1997); nineteenth session of the Working Group of the Statistical Commission on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination (1997); substantive servicing and participation in the task force on international trade statistics (1996 and 1997); Committee on Contributions (1996 and 1997).

Published material

(a) Recurrent publication: task forces: international trade, environment (Secretariat); Directory of International Statistics on diskette (1996);

- (b) Coordination, harmonization and liaison:
- (i) Participation in the inter-agency task forces on: (a) national accounts, convener: Inter-secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA); (b) International trade statistics, convener: GATT; (c) finance statistics, convener: IMF; (d) price statistics, including the International Comparison Programme (ICP), convener: EUROSTAT; (e) industrial and construction statistics, convener: OECD; (f) environment statistics, convener: the Statistical Division; (g) service statistics, convener: OECD; (h) the measurement of poverty, convener: the World Bank;
  - (ii) Collaboration with international organizations: Economic Commission for Europe, FAO, UNIDO, EUROSTAT and OECD in the selective collection and exchange of data, the application of international activity and product classifications, and concepts and definitions in statistics;
  - (iii) Substantive and technical servicing of the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities (1996 and 1997) and preparation of reports for the above-mentioned meetings (1996 and 1997);
  - (iv) Provision of statistical services and expertise to various other United Nations bodies and units of the Secretariat - Habitat, UNHCR, INSTRAW, UNCTAD and other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations;
  - (v) Participation in the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development;
  - (vi) Substantive and technical servicing of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on the ICP;
  - (vii) Substantive and technical servicing of two subcommittees of the Coordination Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD).

Subprogramme 5: Support for technical cooperation  
in statistics and statistical data processing

24. The objectives of the subprogramme are to develop the statistics and statistical capabilities of developing countries and countries in transition through the provision of advisory services, fellowships and training and to provide a feedback mechanism to ensure the relevance of the methodological activities of the Statistical Division.

25. During the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995, technical cooperation was provided to a number of Member States covering a broad range of activities, such as statistical organization and development, general economic statistics, national accounts, demographic and social statistics, environment statistics, statistics on special population groups, national household survey capabilities, and statistical data processing and informatics. In providing this technical

/...

cooperation assistance, appropriate new technologies for processing and disseminating statistics were made available and utilized in the countries that were least advanced.

26. In the biennium 1996-1997, continued support will be given to countries on a broad range of technical cooperation activities. These include economic statistics and national accounts, demographic and social statistics, industry and trade statistics, statistics for special population groups, household surveys, the situation of women, environment statistics, geographical information systems, statistical training, and the organization and management of national statistical services. Emphasis will be given to the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) and the dissemination of related training materials. The programme of work will be guided by General Assembly resolution 44/211, new initiatives relating to national execution, and the renewed emphasis on human development and national capacity-building.

27. Activities of subprogramme 5:

Almost all of the activities in subprogramme 1 have a technical cooperation component. Some activities where technical cooperation predominates are listed below.

#### Parliamentary services

(a) Parliamentary documentation (including official records): report to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session on technical cooperation in statistics;

(b) Ad hoc expert groups and related preparatory work: Expert Group on High Inflation (1996).

#### Technical material

Public and official use of civil registration and vital statistics records (1996); population, education and communication for civil registration (1997); legal framework for population registers and statistics (1997); technical notes to support the technical cooperation programme (1996 and 1997).

#### Operational activities

(a) Advisory services: provision of ad hoc advisory services to developing countries and countries in transition on the establishment and/or improvement of statistical programmes in all areas, specifically in economic, demographic, environment, energy, gender and social statistics and in the establishment of comprehensive information systems. The demand for ad hoc advisory services is expected to increase due to the increased demand for sound statistical information by developing and transitional countries, as well as the implementation of the 1993 SNA;

(b) Group training, including seminars and workshops: participation in and/or coordination of programmes in all areas of statistics. The training programme will be organized directly or through UNDP/UNFPA trust funds and the regular programme for technical cooperation;

(c) Field projects: technical support to country and regional projects to assist developing countries in strengthening and extending national services and capabilities for collecting, processing, disseminating and using a broad range of development-related statistics. The technical support includes the application of the methodological work carried out by the Statistical Division.

Coordination, harmonization and liaison

Regular and formal consultations on technical activities in all aspects of statistics are carried out with the regional commissions, UNIDO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNCTAD, INSTRAW, the World Bank, IMF, EUROSTAT, UNEP and the International Statistical Institute (ISI), as well as other specialized agencies and the bilateral technical cooperation programmes.

-----