

1989/4. Patterns of consumption and qualitative indicators of development

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 40/179 of 17 December 1985 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/6 of 26 May 1987,

²*International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities*, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 4/Rev.2 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.XVII.8).

³E/CN.3/1989/8.

⁴*Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3*, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 34/Rev.3 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.86.XVII.12).

⁵PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/4/Rev.3 and Add.1 and 2.

⁶PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/77 and Add.1.

Recalling also the report of the Statistical Commission on its twenty-fourth session,⁷ in particular, the section on development indicators,⁸

Recognizing that the subject of patterns of consumption and related socio-economic indicators is of considerable importance and priority for developing countries,

Reaffirming that the choice of indicators is a critical matter if structural shifts and trends in the development process are to be accurately assessed,

Stressing that the development of indicators tailored to the fundamental economic and socio-cultural needs of the population in the fields identified in General Assembly resolution 40/179 would help to orient national development and support international co-operation by helping Governments to formulate and follow policies better geared to the well-being of the population,

Stressing also that in order for the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade to be successful, there must be a range of indicators relating to economic and social progress, the application of concerted objectives and early-warning systems,

Having examined the report of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development entitled "Development of indicators on patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development",⁹

1. Strongly supports the work of the Statistical Office of the Secretariat, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the World Bank, which have made considerable progress in producing development indicators, and encourages the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization and the regional commissions to continue their work on indicators tailored to the needs identified by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/179;

2. Affirms the need to identify, as a phase in the development process, patterns of consumption tailored to the well-being of populations and defined as a series of numerical indicative objectives to permit the evaluation, for the use of countries, of the adequate level of satisfaction of fundamental economic and socio-cultural needs in regard to food, housing, clothing, education, health care and necessary social services;

3. Considers that this requires a reliable measur-

ing instrument consisting of a set of indicators related to living conditions, employment and the circumstances underlying them;¹⁰

4. Encourages countries, in this regard, to improve their basic statistical programmes and capabilities and to make efforts to develop the collection processing, analysis and dissemination of data relat-

ing to patterns of consumption, and invites the international community to strengthen the national capabilities of the developing countries with respect to the collection of integrated socio-economic data and their processing, in particular by microcomputer,

with a view to having better and more up-to-date data;

5. Agrees that the *Handbook on Social Indicators*¹¹ prepared by the Statistical Office of the Secretariat and the Living Standards Measurement Study and other conceptual work undertaken by the World Bank¹² should contain guidelines for the selection and compilation of indicators in the precise fields referred to in General Assembly resolution 40/179;

6. Recommends that different ways of developing new indicators be explored and that advantage be taken in particular of the household survey mechanisms available at the national level so as to include therein appropriate modules relating to patterns of consumption and the qualitative aspects of development, while making wide use of conventional survey techniques as well as of new methods of collecting and processing data;

7. Requests the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Statistical Office of the Secretariat to continue their collaboration on the in-depth analysis of the views of Governments, in particular those of the developing countries, and on the timely completion of the national case-studies, of which there should be a greater number, endeavouring to ensure their methodological coherence and the representation of all the developing regions and taking into consideration the economic, technological, social and environmental aspects of development;

8. Welcomes the offer made by the Government of Morocco to act as host, in 1990, in co-operation with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and any other interested organizations, including the World Bank and the Statistical Office of the Secretariat, to an international conference of high-level experts, open to the participation of the members of the Statistical Commission, for the purpose of examining methodological questions and the conceptual aspects of the qualitative indicators of development and of consolidating the various research projects and studies currently under way on that subject;

9. Agrees that the conference would be preceded by a preparatory working group meeting to be convened at Geneva as soon as possible, under the auspices of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and with the participation of appropriate international organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Bank, with a view to drawing up, *inter alia*, a common conceptual framework with a relevant set of core indicators;

⁷Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1987 Supplement No. 6 (E/1987/19).

⁸*Ibid.*, paras. 133-140.

⁹E/CN.3/1989/14.

¹⁰General Assembly resolution 40/179 para 2.

10. *Recommends* that appropriate extrabudgetary resources be allocated for the preparation of the case-studies referred to in paragraph 7 above, and invites interested donor countries, the relevant international organizations and other bodies and institutions wishing to participate in the research work on patterns of consumption and qualitative indicators of development to make voluntary contributions for that purpose to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development:

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the proper dissemination of the present resolution and to take it into consideration in the future work programme of the Statistical Office of the Secretariat, and requests the Secretary-General and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development to submit a final report, containing recommendations, to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

*12th plenary meeting
22 May 1989*

²See E/CN.3/1989/19.

³*Studies in Methods, Series E, No. 49* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.XVII.6)