

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
REPORT ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

(6-15 February 1989)

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

OFFICIAL RECORDS, 1989

SUPPLEMENT No. 3



UNITED NATIONS

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SUMMARY

At its twenty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission adopted two major economic classifications: the third revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC, Rev.3) and the provisional Central Product Classification (CPC). Their adoption represents the culmination of more than a decade of effort by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the Statistical Commission, in co-operation with the European Economic Community and other international organizations, to make international economic classifications more responsive to changing needs and to bring them into greater harmony with other statistical classifications. The Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on international economic classifications (see chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution I). The action taken by the Commission on the subject is set forth in paragraph 95.

The Commission also recommended to the Council the adoption of a draft resolution entitled "Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development" (see chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution II). The draft resolution, which was sponsored by Morocco, calls for further work by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, in co-operation with the Statistical Office, the World Bank and other organizations, on methodological questions on quantitative indicators of development. The Government of Morocco has offered to act as host to an international conference on the subject. The action taken by the Commission is set forth in paragraph 159.

The Commission expressed satisfaction with the progress made on the revision of the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) and the increased participation of regional commissions and developing countries in the SNA review process. It requested once again that the highest priority be given to this work so that a new draft could be submitted to the Commission at its next session. The action taken on the subject is set forth in paragraph 53.

The Commission noted that endeavours to link SNA with the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) had entered an important new phase, as a number of countries with centrally planned economies were currently compiling SNA aggregates regularly. Approaches that would facilitate the integration of the two systems therefore had to be sought, the ultimate goal being the use of common concepts and definitions in the analysis of macro-economic trends and structures. The Commission requested that work on the links continue to receive high priority. The action taken on the subject is set forth in paragraph 68.

The Commission also noted that service statistics, including international trade in services, was a subject of increased importance to users and producers of statistics. It endorsed the efforts of the Secretary-General to seek extrabudgetary resources to advance this work and the voluntary efforts made by co-operating countries to improve service statistics. The action taken by the Commission on the subject is set forth in paragraph 77.

The Commission reaffirmed its support of the technical co-operation work of the Statistical Office and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, especially the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP). Training was singled out as the component of technical co-operation requiring the greatest emphasis. The importance of strengthening developing

country capabilities in data processing and informatics was also stressed, as was the need for co-ordination in multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation activities in statistics. The Commission hoped that the World Bank's new Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project in Africa would be fully co-ordinated with NHSCP. The action taken by the Commission is set forth in paragraphs 174, 182, 192 and 203.

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Chapter I

MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Draft resolutions

1. The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

International economic classifications*

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling resolution 4 (XV) adopted by the Statistical Commission at its fifteenth session, in 1968,

Considering:

(a) The need for implementation of the programme on harmonization of international economic classifications developed by different international organizations,

(b) The importance of international data comparability for various statistics classified according to kind of economic activity or goods and services,

(c) The need to maintain co-ordination among the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities (NACE) and the Classification of Branches of the National Economy (CBNE) of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, as well as among the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) of the Customs Co-operation Council, the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and the new Central Product Classification (CPC),

(d) The desirability of integrating different types of international economic classifications developed by different international organizations and ensuring their consistency with the revised System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy,

(e) The action taken by the Joint Working Group on World Level Classifications of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the Statistical Office of the European Communities, by the United Nations Expert Group on Harmonization of Economic Classifications and by the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics to resolve the outstanding issues related to the

* For the discussion, see paras. 78-97 below.

third revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities and the development of the Central Product Classification,

(f) The proposed revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 2, 1/ as described in the report of the Secretary-General on the revision and harmonization of international economic classifications, 2/ to be known as the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3,

(g) The proposed new Central Product Classification, as described in the report of the Secretary-General, 3/ to be known as the provisional Central Product Classification,

1. Recommends that Member States:

(a) Adopt as soon as possible the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, with such modifications as may be necessary to meet national requirements, without disturbing the framework of the classification, or use, for purposes of international comparison, the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, in reporting data classified according to kind of economic activity;

(b) Make use of the provisional Central Product Classification in order to gain experience in obtaining international comparability for data classified according to goods and services;

2. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To prepare a publication on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, together with indexes and correlation tables between that Classification, the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS), the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3, 4/ and the provisional Central Product Classification, based on the provisional text before the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session 5/ and in the light of the conclusions of the Commission;

1/ 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).

2/ E/CN.3/1989/8.

3/ Ibid.

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

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

(b) To prepare a publication on the provisional Central Product Classification, together with the explanatory notes for the services part of the classification, based on the provisional text before the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session 6/ and in the light of the conclusions of the Commission;

(c) To publish and circulate the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, and the provisional Central Product Classification and to bring them to the attention of States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies for adoption.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

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,

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,

* For the discussion, see paras. 154-161 below.

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

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

8/ Ibid., paras. 133-140.

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 United Nations 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 measuring instrument consisting of a set of indicators related to living conditions, employment and the circumstances underlying them; 10/

4. Encourages, in this regard, countries to improve their basic statistical programmes and capabilities and to make efforts to develop the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of data relating 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 United Nations Secretariat and the Living Standards Measurement Study and other conceptual work undertaken by the World Bank 12/ contain guidelines for the selection and compilation of indicators in the precise fields referred to in General Assembly resolution 40/179;

9/ E/CN.3/1989/14.

10/ General Assembly resolution 40/179, para. 2.

11/ Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 49 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.XVII.6).

12/ See E/CN.3/1989/19.

6. Recommends that different ways be explored, to develop new development indicators 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 United Nations Secretariat to continue their collaboration in the in-depth analysis of the views of Governments, in particular those of the developing countries, and in the timely completion of the national case-studies, of which there should be a greater number, while 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 with satisfaction 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 United Nations 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;

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 United Nations 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, for consideration also by the Economic and Social Council and by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

B. Draft decision

2. The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

Report of the Statistical Commission on its twenty-fifth session
and the provisional agenda and documentation for the twenty-sixth
session of the Commission

The Economic and Social Council:

- (a) Takes note of the report of the Statistical Commission on its twenty-fifth session;
- (b) Approves the provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Commission set out below, together with the documentation listed.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF
THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Special issues:
 - (a) Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services;
 - (b) Implications of structural adjustment and the debt crisis for national statistical services and international statistical work, and statistical needs related to the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade.
4. National accounts and balances:
 - (a) System of National Accounts (SNA);

Documentation

Report on progress made in the review of the System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

Report of the Working Party of the Conference of European Statisticians on the System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

Report of the Economic Commission for Africa Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

Report of the expert group meeting on SNA/MPS links (para. 53 (m))

Draft of the revised System of National Accounts (para. 53 (m))

(b) System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS);

Documentation

Report on any elaboration of MPS considered by the expert group meeting convened by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1989 (para. 58 (b))

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

Documentation

Report on the progress made in the harmonization of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) (para. 68 (c))

5. International economic classifications.

Documentation

Report on progress of work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) (para. 105 (d))

6. Service statistics.

Documentation

Report on the work done by national and international agencies in the field of service statistics (para. 77 (c))

Report on a substantive topic prepared by the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics (para. 77 (c))

7. Price statistics.

Documentation

Report on developments in phase VI of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and on other related international comparison issues (para. 117 (d))

8. Industrial statistics.

Documentation

Report on the effectiveness of the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics

9. Demographic, social and environment statistics:

(a) Population and housing censuses;

Documentation

Report on progress in the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme (para. 127 (g))

(b) Social statistics and indicators;

Documentation

Report on co-ordination of statistical programmes for social indicators

Report on progress made in the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest at the national and international levels (para. 141 (b))

(c) Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development;

Documentation

Final report on the case-studies carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, on qualitative aspects of development and on the results of the planned international statistical meeting on the subject (draft resolution II)

(d) Environment statistics.

Documentation

Report on methods of environment statistics developed under the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians (para. 153 (h))

Report on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans (para. 153 (i))

10. Development and integration of methodological work.

Documentation

Report on the general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (para. 163 (b))

11. Technical co-operation:

(a) Technical co-operation in statistics;

Documentation

Report on technical co-operation in statistics (para. 174 (h))

(b) National Household Survey Capability Programme;

Documentation

Report on the progress of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) and its co-ordination with other household survey programmes including results of available evaluations of NHSCP (para. 192 (e))

(c) World Bank household survey initiatives.

Documentation

Report on the progress of the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) programmes, including fuller details of the survey methodology proposed for the SDA programme and the results of available evaluations of these initiatives (para. 203 (g))

12. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes.

Documentation

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its thirteenth session

Report on the statistical work of international organizations (para. 209 (b))

Report on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics (para. 225 (d))

13. Programme questions.

(a) Programme performance and implementation;

Documentation

Report on the statistical work of international organizations
(para. 209 (b))

Report containing updated information on the work of the Statistical
Office of the United Nations Secretariat

(b) Programme objectives and planning.

Documentation

Draft work programme of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993,
including relevant information on the medium-term plan for the
period 1992-1997

Report on the plans of international organizations in the field of
statistics (para. 225 (d))

14. Draft provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the
Commission.
15. Report of the Commission on its twenty-sixth session.

C. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

3. The attention of the Council is drawn to the recommendation of the Commission that the thirteenth session of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination be held at Geneva from 11 to 14 September 1989 (see para. 207 (c) below).

4. The attention of the Council is also drawn to the decisions and other recommendations of the Commission (see paras. 19, 27, 39, 53, 58, 68, 77, 95, 105, 117, 127, 141, 153, 159, 163, 174, 182, 192, 203, 207, 209, 219 and 225 below).

Chapter II

SPECIAL ISSUES AND RELATED MATTERS

A. Co-ordination of international statistical activities

5. The Commission considered item 3 (a) of its agenda at its 421st and 422nd meetings, on 6 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its twelfth session (E/CN.3/1989/20, paras. 50-61) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22, annex, paras. 13-17).
6. During the discussion, the Commission recalled the review it had conducted of its own functioning at its twenty-fourth session for submission to the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields and, in particular, its consideration of co-ordination and the relationship between the Statistical Commission and regional intergovernmental bodies.
7. The Commission reaffirmed the critical importance of co-ordination in international work. It recognized that considerable success had been achieved in co-ordination in a number of areas, including (a) recurrent data collection, processing and sharing among the international organizations, (b) ad hoc requests for statistics directed to Member States by non-statistical units of the United Nations and other international organizations and (c) major substantive programmes, such as the revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and harmonization of international classifications. The Commission also noted that attention was being given to co-ordination mechanisms in new areas, such as statistics on services. However, it considered that there was scope for improvement in the coverage and effectiveness of co-ordination.
8. The Commission was of the opinion that the existing institutional structures for promoting co-ordination and statistical development were appropriate and effective. The structures included the Statistical Commission itself, the regional intergovernmental bodies, the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination and the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), supported by a number of informal processes among the international organizations. The Commission noted that the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had both recognized, on a number of occasions, that the international statistical programme was well co-ordinated. Several representatives emphasized that co-ordination should not be reduced during the current period of financial restriction. They considered that improved co-ordination was an essential response to financial limitations. The Commission noted that several successful initiatives had been taken by the international organizations to share limited staff and financial resources, in particular in the work on the SNA review, harmonization of classifications and development of statistics on services.
9. Some of the areas identified as requiring additional development and co-ordination, including standardization of definitions, classifications and practices were (a) environment statistics, where the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Conference of European Statisticians had made considerable progress

in developing methodology; (b) indicators for development; (c) productivity statistics and (d) statistics on illiteracy. Co-ordination of the collection of environment statistics was also highlighted. The Commission also considered that co-ordination between bilateral and multilateral donors in technical co-operation at the country level could be improved. The point was made that there might be practical limits to harmonization and co-ordination in particular areas. That should not discourage efforts aimed at co-ordination but suggested that the marginal benefits to be obtained from additional efforts should be assessed.

10. Several representatives expressed the view that more analysis should be carried out by the international statistical organizations, as that would be of value to users and would help to identify both ways of improving basic statistical data and new sets of data that were important for analytical purposes. The point was made that the need for analytical work by the international statistical organizations would depend, in part, on the particular organizational arrangements for data collection and compilation and for research and analysis in each organization. The question of the appropriate degree of analysis to be conducted also depended upon the needs of the users of the statistical data. Several representatives also pointed out the value of conversion keys for different classifications and the development of common aggregates to promote international comparability and use of statistical data.

11. The Commission agreed that national statistical development and international comparability of data could be advanced by promoting wider implementation of international recommendations and guidelines. Translation of such publications into local languages was often necessary. The Commission requested the international organizations to investigate ways of facilitating the translation of international methodological publications into local languages; one such way would be to make the publications concise.

12. Several representatives considered that it would be useful to (a) establish a list of key issues concerning international statistical development in which co-ordination was an important consideration, (b) propose priorities among those issues and (c) identify the most appropriate ways of proceeding with those subjects, taking co-ordination fully into account. The process would involve identifying organizations or countries with the most appropriate expertise and resources to assume lead roles and carry out development work. The Commission decided to ask the Working Group to consider the matter at its thirteenth session. The suggestion was made that a few areas could be selected on an experimental basis to see whether alternative approaches to co-ordination would be successful in meeting needs.

13. The Commission also noted that effective co-ordination at the international level had a positive impact on co-ordination in national statistical systems. Harmonized methods, definitions, classifications and frameworks developed at the international level were important tools for promoting co-ordinated statistical development in countries. However, regional differences needed to be taken into account in methodological work and that called for a strong regional component.

14. The extent to which standardization in statistical work could be achieved at the country level was limited, inter alia, by the level of development of individual countries. Exchange of experience among countries at different levels of development and with different economic systems could be beneficial to many countries. The suggestion was made that the Statistical Office of the United

Nations Secretariat could develop additional mechanisms for the exchange of such experience. Expanding the provision of advice and assistance to countries in the implementation of recommended classifications would also promote international standardization.

15. The point was made that multilateral communication was essential to increased co-ordination. Face-to-face meetings were seen as generally the most effective way of ensuring co-ordination; but as a supplement, and given the limited financial resources available for attending meetings, organizations should pursue all means of improving communication, including electronic means.

16. The Commission expressed concern about developments with regard to the legislative committee structure and organizational arrangements in the Secretariat related to statistical matters in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Commission stressed the importance of a strong and vigorous regional component in statistical work both at the intergovernmental level and in the secretariats of all the regional commissions. The Commission noted the well-established and effective complementary relationship between the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the statistical divisions of the regional commissions, an essential element in world-wide statistical development in support of analysis and policy formulation at the national, regional and world levels. While the discussion focused on the ESCAP region, the Commission considered that the views expressed were also applicable to the other regions.

17. The Commission recalled that it had previously stressed the importance of the regional intergovernmental statistical bodies and that the Commission and its Working Group had been seeking a closer relationship between those bodies and the Commission. The Working Group had requested that the chairmen of the regional intergovernmental statistical bodies be invited to participate in the work of the Statistical Commission as observers. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the chairmen of two of those bodies were attending the current session.

18. The Commission noted that a number of observations that had been made on co-ordination in some fields, such as environment statistics, social statistics and indicators, service statistics and technical co-operation, would also be relevant to the discussion to be held under other agenda items.

Action taken by the Commission

19. The Commission:

(a) Reaffirmed the critical importance of co-ordination in international work;

(b) Recognized that considerable success had been achieved in co-ordination in a number of areas;

(c) Recognized the appropriateness and effectiveness of the existing institutional structures for promoting co-ordination and statistical development, namely, the Statistical Commission itself, the regional intergovernmental statistical bodies, the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities;

(d) Considered that there was scope for improvement in the coverage and effectiveness of co-ordination;

(e) Identified some areas where further development and standardization was called for and requested the Working Group to (i) establish a list of key issues concerning international statistical development in which co-ordination was an important consideration; (ii) propose priorities among those issues; and (iii) identify the most appropriate ways of proceeding with those subjects, giving full attention to co-ordination while recognizing that there might be practical limits to harmonization and co-ordination in particular areas;

(f) Requested the international organizations to investigate ways of facilitating the translation of international methodological publications into local languages and of helping to promote implementation of international guidelines, taking into account regional and national conditions;

(g) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to investigate the possibility of developing additional mechanisms for the exchange of country experiences in statistical development and standardization, which would also assist in wider implementation of international recommendations and guidelines;

(h) Considered that, depending upon organizational arrangements in effect in national or international institutions, statistical services could usefully undertake additional analysis that would benefit users and improve the quality and relevance of statistical data;

(i) Decided to consider further several matters, including timeliness in issuing revised international classifications and other statistical development work, under other items of the agenda of the current session;

(j) Considered that the development of conversion keys between different classifications and the development of common aggregates would promote comparability of data and facilitate their analysis and use;

(k) Expressed concern at developments with regard to the legislative committee structure and organizational arrangements in the Secretariat related to statistical matters in the ESCAP region; stressed the importance of a strong and vigorous regional component for statistical work both at the intergovernmental level and in the secretariats of the regional commissions; and requested the Statistical Office to continue to provide all available support to the regional commissions, in particular ESCAP;

(l) Requested the Working Group to continue to review co-ordination of the statistical data collection activities of the international organizations, including statistical data collection by non-statistical units of those organizations;

(m) Decided to include methodological development of environmental statistics in the agenda of the twenty-sixth session and to request the Economic Commission for Europe to prepare a paper on its methodological development work as a basis for consideration of the item.

B. Recruitment and selection of professional staff for work in national statistical offices and statistical services of the United Nations

20. The Commission considered item 3 (b) of its agenda at its 422nd meeting, on 6 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the recruitment and selection of professional staff for work in national statistical offices and statistical services of the United Nations (E/CN.3/1989/2) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22, paras. 3-21).

21. The Commission agreed that the topic was of primary importance, since a skilled staff was a crucial factor in the production of statistics. It expressed the view that the problems and issues described in the report accurately reflected the experiences of national and international statistical services in the recruitment and selection of professional staff. It then addressed, in a broad way, the impact of those issues on their statistical offices.

22. It was pointed out that the requirements of statistical services were multidisciplinary and involved various specializations in the field of statistics, including subject-matter skills. The Commission emphasized the need for management and administrative skills, including the ability to work well with users of statistics. The need for skills in data processing and report writing was also emphasized. It was observed that even when candidates with good academic qualifications were found, that was not a sufficient basis for performing efficiently in a national or international statistical office. For that reason, the Commission considered that experienced staff of national statistical offices of Member States were the most suitable source for recruitment of professional staff for work in the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the statistical services of the regional commissions.

23. The Commission recognized that recruitment in many national and international statistical offices was affected by limited and decreasing resources. The constraints the situation imposed on the public sector, specifically on statistical services, were reflected in inadequate salary scales, rigidity in administrative procedures, poor career mobility and insufficient recognition of the importance and relevance of statistical services. For such reasons, the statistical services were at a disadvantage relative to the private sector and, in comparison with certain priority areas, also within the public sector. While similar problems were experienced by both developed and developing countries, several representatives informed the Commission that in a number of developing countries the entire civil service system was experiencing serious difficulties owing to the impact of structural adjustment and the debt crisis.

24. It was widely acknowledged that innovative means had to be found to attract good candidates to the statistical services. To that end, various proposals were offered: planning in advance for staffing needs to fit the annual cycles of availability of new university graduates; developing a system of benefits that would be considered attractive to potential recruits; upgrading the statistical service to an autonomous entity; and using private sector criteria to manage and remunerate staff. A number of countries emphasized that some highly qualified candidates were attracted to service in the public sector, especially in the field of statistics because of the unique set of problems addressed and the opportunity to work with otherwise restricted data.

25. The Commission agreed that training was a key measure used by developing and developed countries to address problems of building and retaining a skilled staff. Several members said that as a result of the very high turnover rates of professional staff in developing countries, training imposed great and unavoidable costs. It was noted, however, that costs might be reduced if training efforts were addressed systematically rather than on an ad hoc basis. Numerous examples and proposals were given concerning specific national training experiences. They included in-house training organized for different skill levels, on-the-job training programmes, released time for formal courses, workshops, seminars and study tours, as well as interchange with other national and international statistical services. In particular, it was noted that several national statistical offices provided in-house specialized and general training programmes for their staff and that in some cases nationals from other countries already participated in such programmes. It was suggested that the practice should be broadened and extended to staff from the statistical services of United Nations organizations. The exchange of information on training programmes, curricula, materials and training aids was judged by the Commission to be of use among several national statistical services. Direct technical co-operation from international statistical services was requested as an aid to national efforts in this area. A suggestion was made that the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination consider the possibility of including statistical education and training in its list of special topics to be discussed at the twenty-sixth session of the Commission.

26. Several representatives expressed the view that it was difficult in practical terms to separate issues of recruitment from issues of retention of professional staff. While the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/2) dealt primarily with recruitment, many Commission members considered that retention of staff was an equally relevant issue, citing specifically competition with the private sector and other higher priority areas of the public sector, and training, which could increase staff motivation and possibilities for career development.

Action taken by the Commission

27. The Commission:

(a) Broadly endorsed section I of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/2), in which were discussed the importance of and problems connected with recruiting technically qualified professional staff in national and international statistical services, including the need for a variety of skills and subject-matter specializations to cover the wide range of responsibilities that the statistical offices were expected to meet;

(b) Requested more national statistical offices that provided specialized and general training courses for their staff to consider the possibility of opening those programmes to participants from other countries and statistical staff from international organizations;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to take into account the views expressed on providing technical co-operation for regional and country training needs in statistics;

(d) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to consider the feasibility of collecting information on training curricula and sharing it with national statistical services.

C. Recurrent statistical publications of the United Nations

28. The Commission considered item 3 (c) of its agenda at its 423rd meeting, on 7 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on recurrent statistical publications of the United Nations (E/CN.3/1989/3).

29. The Commission considered the report to be very useful in discussing the request of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to review recurrent statistical publications in the light of the criteria set forth in General Assembly resolution 38/32 E, with a view to terminating those publications that did not meet the criteria or to reducing their periodicity or volume.

30. The Commission recalled that at its past several sessions it had considered topics related to the dissemination of international statistics. It was noted that at its twenty-fourth session the Commission had concluded that the collation and dissemination of international statistics by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat met a well-established and justified need (see E/CN.3/1987/26, para. 32). The Commission reaffirmed that conclusion at its current session. Indeed, it considered that the list of recurrent statistical publications under review represented the minimum necessary to meet user needs. Since United Nations statistical publications were a basic source of international statistics, the review of those publications should be carried out with great care. In that connection, the Commission noted that the General Assembly, in resolution 38/32 E, had specified that sales figures were only one of several criteria specified for determining the usefulness of publications.

31. The Commission emphasized that recurrent statistical publications prepared by the Statistical Office were unique and especially useful to Governments, universities, research centres and the like. For many countries, particularly developing countries, those publications were the basic source of information in the economic and social area. They enabled each country to have its statistics presented in such a way that they could be compared with those of other countries, thus providing information on a wide range of economic, social and demographic issues.

32. The Commission noted that the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat for 1990-1991 already included several consolidations or cancellations of publications included in the list of recurrent publications under review by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. Accordingly, the Commission endorsed the continuation of the recurrent statistical publications prepared by the Statistical Office set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/3), modified to reflect the proposed programme of work. Several representatives proposed that ways be explored to retain some of the publications proposed for cancellation. There was particular concern that such cancellations might, in some cases, affect the collection of data.

33. Various ways of improving the usefulness of publications prepared by the Statistical Office were suggested: improving the timeliness and quality of data published and enhancing marketing strategy, including publicity through the regional commissions and national statistical offices. It was suggested that for certain topics, prompt dissemination of important basic data, thus improving their timeliness, would contribute to increasing the interest of the user. The complementarity among statistical publications prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, the statistical divisions of the regional commissions and the statistical divisions of the specialized agencies was also stressed.

34. Some members requested the Statistical Office to examine the feasibility of reducing the size of some of the larger publications on the grounds that they were cumbersome to use and expensive to produce and distribute. That might be achieved by eliminating detailed tables that could be provided from the data bank on request. It was suggested that some publications could be issued less frequently if it was considered that doing so would improve the comprehensiveness and quality of the statistics and the distribution of the publications. It was noted, however, that such a review would have to be carried out carefully to ensure that revised publications would continue to serve user needs. Although the view was expressed that the Population and Vital Statistics Report might be combined with the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, it was recognized that those two publications served widely different user groups and that the resources needed to produce the former publication were modest.

35. Many representatives spoke of their experiences in national and international offices with regard to statistical publications. They gave examples of market research and issuance of new kinds of publications containing analytical text, graphics and summary tables.

36. The Commission considered strategies for meeting user needs without increasing the number of the recurrent publications prepared by the Statistical Office. The use of improved technology, computers, photocomposition and integrated systems software was recognized as an important part of that effort. Another aspect dealt with ways of disseminating international statistics other than in publications; for example, in computer readable form (magnetic tapes, diskettes, CD-ROM and on-line access), on microfiche and in ad hoc hard copy of tables stored in data bases. Several representatives said they believed that microfiche was an inexpensive, effective and easy-to-use method of dissemination in developing countries. Other representatives referred to microcomputer diskettes as an effective means of dissemination. In some developing countries, however, that method might require significant investment both in equipment and in training. It was also considered important that studies be done to investigate the compatibility between media and equipment. Some representatives were of the opinion that the use of electronic media for statistical dissemination should not entirely replace publications in printed form but, at least for the present, should have a supplementary role only.

37. The Commission noted that the CD-ROM or optical disk held considerable promise as an effective way of disseminating statistics. For the present, however, some countries felt it to be an expensive method. On-line links to statistical data bases were mentioned as an effective method of disseminating data to users with the necessary technological capacity. However, since many Member States were not yet in a position to benefit from on-line access, it was still too early to introduce that method at the national level. The Commission was informed that many agencies

were carrying out experimental studies of the use of CD-ROM or optical disk for the dissemination of certain statistical data and planned to develop a facility for on-line access to a United Nations system data base of core statistical series.

38. The Commission requested the Statistical Office to explore and expand the use of alternative methods of disseminating international statistics, bearing in mind the need to achieve a balance between the various forms of dissemination available at the present time and in the near future and to take into account the relative advantages of each.

Action taken by the Commission

39. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the continuation of the statistical publications programme of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, contained in the proposed work programme for 1990-1991 (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.1), reflecting the cancellation and consolidation of some publications listed in the table set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/3);

(b) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat:

- (i) To continue the ongoing review of recurrent publications to assess current usefulness and relevance in relation to user needs and to improve timeliness and quality;
- (ii) To investigate the possibility of reducing the size and/or periodicity of some of the publications and, in some instances, merging them with other publications, if doing so was deemed appropriate and beneficial to users;
- (iii) To explore and expand alternative methods of disseminating statistical information, bearing in mind the need to achieve a balance between the various forms of dissemination available and to take into account the advantages and limitations of traditional and newer methods of dissemination;
- (iv) To continue efforts to develop marketing strategies to widen the dissemination of statistical publications;
- (v) To serve as a referral service in the area of statistical data from international and national publications.

Chapter III

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AND BALANCES

A. System of National Accounts (SNA)

40. The Commission considered item 4 (a) of its agenda at its 425th and 426th meetings, on 8 February 1989. It had before it the progress report of the Secretary-General on the revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1989/4) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22).

41. The Commission expressed overall satisfaction with the progress made in implementing the SNA review programme since its twenty-fourth session. It noted that the progress was largely due to the efforts of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the other participating organizations (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) and the co-ordinating role of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts. It was pleased to note the participation of the regional commissions in the Inter-Secretariat Working Group and the increasing involvement of developing countries in the review process, including their representation in the expert groups and the co-ordinating group, as well as the participation of some developed countries in regional commission meetings in the developing regions. It considered it essential that handbooks be prepared as soon as possible and that developing countries be actively involved in preparing them, and requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to attach high priority to this work. It also endorsed the work on links between SNA and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) and highlighted the importance of developing satellite accounts - in particular, accounts related to the environment. Once again, the Commission agreed on the importance of translating and editing the French and Spanish versions of the drafts of the revised SNA simultaneously with the English version in order to avoid terminological and substantive differences and to facilitate the SNA meetings to be organized by the regional commissions.

42. The Commission reaffirmed the original objectives of the SNA review programme when it was initiated in 1982: simplification and clarification, harmonization, and updating the system to fit new circumstances. However, different views were expressed on how well those objectives were being achieved. Some felt that the review process had departed significantly from the objective of simplification. Others, however, expressed the view that such simplification would have to be implemented through operational handbooks. It was generally felt that the objectives of clarification of the system and harmonization between national accounts and related statistics had been successfully implemented during the current review process. The Commission was pleased, in particular, with the harmonization between SNA and related IMF systems on balance of payments, government finance and money and banking statistics. Several members proposed that analytical relevance be added as another very important objective, thus ensuring that the system would not only be developed as a statistical framework but would also respond effectively to analytical needs.

43. The Commission considered the proposed rescheduling of the SNA review activities and generally concurred with the resulting programme of expert group and regional meetings to review the subsequent drafts of the revised SNA. The rescheduling implied that two expert group meetings would be held in the summer of 1989 to discuss the first complete draft of the revised SNA. The draft would be issued in English. The draft would be revised before the end of 1989 in the light of comments from the experts participating in the two meetings. In the first part of 1990, the revised English draft would be translated into French and Spanish and would be available for use at the regional meetings. Under that arrangement, the regional meetings would be held between April and December 1990. As a result, the next session of the Statistical Commission would have available a revised version of the SNA draft in all the required languages of the Commission, together with reports of the SNA review meetings organized by the regional commissions. In addition, the report of the expert group meeting on SNA/MPS links, which was to be held late in 1989, would also be made available to the Commission.

44. The Commission attached considerable importance to the dissemination of SNA documents and progress reports. There was broad agreement that continued emphasis should be placed on the dissemination of SNA review information beyond the limited circle of experts actively involved in the review process. The Commission requested that, as soon as possible after the expert group meetings in the summer of 1989, a document be prepared and circulated to a large group of experts and national statistical offices, giving the conclusions of all the expert group meetings held until then, together with a summary of the changes in SNA that had resulted from their conclusions. That would facilitate the incorporation of comments made by national statistical and other experts into the redrafting of the revised SNA. In addition, in that way national statistical offices could begin to prepare themselves by discussing budgetary and other considerations applied in the implementation of the revised SNA.

45. The Commission recognized that the SNA review process required considerable technical and financial resources. It expressed its appreciation for the generous contributions made by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), IMF, OECD and the World Bank, other international organizations, regional commissions and individual countries. Appreciation was also expressed by the Commission for the funding by a member State of one of the regional commission meetings that were being planned. It was essential, the Commission stressed, that additional funds be mobilized, so that the remaining SNA activities could be carried out according to the agreed schedule. In particular, funds were needed for the regional commission meetings in 1990 and for the handbooks. Before allocating funds to those activities, some participants said they would like to be informed about the actual financial gap which existed between available financial resources and needs. One member expressed concern about the request of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat for contributions in kind for drafting the handbooks, and said that for timely and quality documents, one should not rely on volunteers but rather on experts close to the revision process.

46. The Commission commended the preliminary draft of the selected chapters of the revised SNA. The draft was considered a good attempt to clarify some of the SNA concepts, and the Commission was confident that the rest of the text would be equally well prepared. The Commission was generally satisfied with the proposed content and pedagogical presentation of the revised SNA. It agreed that in addition to the current text, the revised SNA should contain a glossary and an accounting framework with tables. In the further elaboration of the accounting

framework, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat would be assisted by a consultant. Several members suggested the inclusion of a chapter in the revised SNA to explain the linkage between SNA and MPS. Others stressed the need for continuity of time series and suggested that detailed relationships between the revised SNA and the current one be included in an additional chapter or as an annex. Some members wanted to include in the revised SNA the relations between the SNA accounting framework and the SNA questionnaire tables.

47. The need for the development of handbooks, which had been expressed at previous sessions of the Commission, was stressed again by many participants - in particular, the need for handbooks on national accounting in constant prices, financial flows and balances, use of national accounts in planning and analysis, environmental accounting and measurement of the informal sector. While several countries were interested in contributing to the further development of such handbooks, based on their experience, several participants thought that it would be more effective if the first drafts of the handbooks were prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and subsequently circulated for comments, so that the experience of the statistical offices in individual countries could be incorporated in a more organized way. The Commission was pleased to learn that IMF would sponsor the elaboration of handbooks on external transactions and financial flows and balance sheets in parallel with the planned revisions of the current IMF manuals of balance of payments and money and banking statistics. The involvement of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the preparation of the handbook on national accounting in constant prices was supported.

48. A number of participants from countries with centrally planned economies emphasized the need to adapt SNA to the specific circumstances of their countries, in view of the interest expressed in those countries in using the SNA guidelines. It was suggested that in the remaining stages of the SNA review programme, particularly during the forthcoming expert group meeting on SNA/MPS links, attention should be paid to the data and conceptual relations of the two systems so that SNA could be as widely applicable as possible. The further development of SNA along those lines could draw on the experience of countries that had used both systems, some over long periods of time.

49. Although the Commission emphasized the need to take into account the requirements of users, in particular planners and policy makers, and also the limitations imposed by data availability, there were different views on how that should be done. Members emphasized the need to involve users more intensively in the SNA review process itself. The Commission agreed that basic data development was critical to the implementation of SNA and agreed that training of national accounts experts would be an essential element in the implementation of the revised SNA. Support was also expressed for the efforts of the Statistical Office to develop a compilation methodology which would facilitate implementation of the revised SNA.

50. Some members expressed the view that the system would have to last for a long period of time and that its scope should therefore not be tied only to data currently available; rather, it should be forward-looking. Others, however, pointed out that SNA should take into account cost implications and the limited resources available for statistical development, particularly in developing countries. Certain members stressed that SNA guidelines should be as close as possible to commercial accounting practices since that would facilitate the

provision and interpretation of data by respondents who at the same time might be users of the data. They urged, for instance, that the treatment of financial intermediaries be brought into line with the practices found in that field.

51. The Commission supported the proposal of including environmental accounts as satellite accounts in the revised SNA and noted with appreciation the planned preparation of a handbook on environmental accounting. However, some members expressed the view that the revision of SNA was too cautious and that the system should have been extended to cover a "sustainable income" concept.

52. Some participants raised technical issues that had been or should have been discussed in the SNA review. High inflation and multiple exchange rates were mentioned as important issues that should be resolved in the next SNA. In the same context was mentioned the need to come up with a treatment for banking imputations, closer to commercial accounting practices, to incorporate a clear definition of statistical units for the production and institutional sector accounts, to review the concept of residency in SNA, to give a clear definition of the coverage of the informal sector, to provide clear criteria on the distinction between current and capital transfers, to identify separately imputations and attributions, to incorporate clearly in the system dual sectoring of value-added, and to elaborate methods on how to incorporate illegal activities. Some participants questioned the recommendation to extend capital formation beyond its current boundaries in SNA by including, for example, research and development and some service elements. One participant mentioned that regional accounting implications should be taken into account in the development of SNA.

Action taken by the Commission

53. The Commission:

(a) Reaffirmed the original objectives of the SNA revision - simplification and clarification, harmonization, and updating the system to fit new circumstances. It noted the importance of making SNA relevant to user and analytical needs. It requested that the proper development of the satellite accounts and the SNA handbooks deal with any complexity that arose during the revision;

(b) Expressed its satisfaction with the work on the SNA revision that had been completed since its twenty-fourth session and with the increased participation by developing countries in the review process;

(c) Endorsed the revised SNA review timetable: two expert groups would be held in the summer of 1989 to discuss the first complete draft in English of the revised SNA and an SNA/MPS expert group meeting would be convened in the last quarter of 1989; the draft would be revised before the end of 1989 in the light of comments from the experts participating in the two meetings; the revised English draft would be edited and translated into French and Spanish in the first half of 1990; regional meetings would be held between April and the end of 1990;

(d) Agreed again on the importance of editing and translating the French and Spanish versions of the revised SNA draft simultaneously with the English version, in order to avoid terminological differences and facilitate the regional SNA meetings;

(e) Confirmed that when changes were proposed in the current SNA treatment on which no agreement was reached, the current SNA treatment should be maintained;

(f) Requested that as soon as possible after the expert group meeting in the summer of 1989, a document be prepared and circulated to a large group of experts and national statistical offices, giving the conclusions of all expert group meetings held until then, together with a summary of the changes in SNA that resulted from their conclusions;

(g) Emphasized the need to complete as many operational handbooks as possible in the next biennium with available resources. The handbooks should be issued as drafts and circulated for comments to national accounts experts, in time to be finalized about the same time as the revised SNA;

(h) Requested that in the remaining work on the SNA review, data concerns and special analytical and planning uses be taken into account;

(i) Supported the application of the national accounts compilation methodology developed by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat which would facilitate early implementation of SNA particularly in developing countries;

(j) Assigned highest priority to work on the SNA review, including the production of handbooks;

(k) Noted as critical the need to mobilize all funds required for a timely completion of the SNA review programme, which required an intensification of effort on the part of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat as well as the commitment of extrabudgetary funds which were urgently needed for the completion of handbooks, the organization of SNA review meetings by the regional commissions and the participation of experts from developing countries in the remaining expert group meetings on SNA co-ordination;

(l) Requested that in the remaining stage of the SNA review programme, particularly during the forthcoming expert group meeting on SNA/MPS links, attention be paid to the data and conceptual relations between the two systems. The development of SNA along those lines could draw on the experience of countries that used both systems over long periods of time;

(m) Agreed that the SNA review would be included in the agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission and requested the following documents in all the required languages of the Commission: (i) a progress report on the SNA review; (ii) a draft of the revised SNA; (iii) a report of the expert group meeting on SNA/MPS links in 1989; (iv) reports of the SNA review meetings to be organized by each of the regional commissions in 1990.

B. System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

54. The Commission considered item 4 (b) of its agenda at its 426th meeting, on 8 February 1989. It had before it the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/5 and Corr.1) transmitting a report of the secretariat of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), which contained information on developments in the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS).

55. The Commission was informed that some countries with centrally planned economies were using MPS and SNA, that others were calculating indicators in accordance with SNA, and that most of them intended to continue the work to bring the two systems closer. The Commission also noted the increased number of co-operation projects between countries using MPS and those using SNA.

56. Several members noted the importance of the improved MPS methodology for use in macro-economic analysis not only in countries with centrally planned economies but also in some developing countries. The MPS concept of total consumption of population was specifically cited as an important indicator for the analysis of the level of well-being and for the development of social policy in developing countries.

57. The Commission was pleased to learn that several countries using MPS had indicated that they could see the time when MPS and SNA would be integrated so that SNA and MPS concepts and aggregates would be available to all countries. In that regard, the Commission was also pleased to learn that a further development of MPS was being launched. That would undoubtedly contribute to the integration process.

Action taken by the Commission

58. The Commission:

(a) Took note of the progress achieved in the development of MPS and urged that work on the further elaboration of the system be continued;

(b) Requested that any elaboration of MPS considered by the CMEA expert group meeting in 1989 be reported to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

C. Links between the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

59. The Commission considered item 4 (c) of its agenda at its 426th meeting, on 8 February 1989. It had before it the progress report of the Secretary-General on links between the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) (E/CN.3/1989/6).

60. The Commission noted several recent developments referred to in its discussion of items 4 (a) and (b), which were of importance for its discussion of SNA/MPS links.

61. The work on SNA/MPS links, which had been mostly restricted to explaining the differences between the two systems (by comparing concepts and definitions, compiling adjustment tables and, in a few cases, constructing common aggregates, such as total consumption of the population), had entered a new phase. The main objective was now the achievement of substantial progress in convergence of SNA and MPS, with the ultimate goal of integrating the two systems. The most important element in the new phase was the decision by a number of centrally planned economies to compile various SNA aggregates regularly for their own national use. The Commission noted that some countries had used or planned to use the entire SNA system in addition to the MPS system.

62. The Commission considered that in view of those developments the work on SNA/MPS links should continue to get high priority in the coming years. Significant accomplishments would lead to a breakthrough in improving comparability between countries with different economic systems. The next two years, in particular, might be pivotal. Accordingly, the work on SNA/MPS links would require some reorientation.

63. The recent developments drew attention to new requirements of the national accounting systems: SNA and MPS should be flexible enough to be used in countries with economic systems different from those for which they were originally intended. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the CMEA secretariat had already initiated a revision of MPS in that direction. The Commission considered that in the ongoing revision of SNA the same aspect should get serious attention: the system should, as much as possible, be made adaptable to the conditions of centrally planned economies.

64. Several participants considered that the ultimate aim of the work on SNA/MPS links should be the integration of the two systems - for example, to have an SNA from which MPS aggregates could easily be derived by appropriate regrouping. In that way there would be a conceptual unity between the two systems which would enable any country to use both systems for national practices if required. The Commission expressed sympathy with the challenge, but felt that further elaboration of the problems was needed before a decision could be taken.

65. The Commission considered that the continuation of work in the traditional areas of SNA/MPS links would also be useful. The comparison of concepts and the compilation of adjustment tables would be particularly useful for those aggregates to which relatively little attention had been paid in the past (e.g., income, national wealth). Special attention should be given to those aggregates which, in principle, should be common in the two systems (such as total consumption of the population) but which, since the revisions were not sufficiently co-ordinated, still differed to some extent. To have a detailed inventory of the differences was an important pre-condition for the convergence of the two systems.

66. Bilateral and multilateral collaboration among countries using different systems could substantially contribute to that work. The Commission expressed its appreciation to Bulgaria, France, Finland and Hungary for their valuable work on linking SNA and MPS results, which contributed greatly to the methodology of international comparison of different national account aggregates. It was also pleased to note a number of relevant new initiatives: Hungary was about to engage in a new bilateral comparison with the Netherlands; Japan had launched a three-year project in the methodology and compilation of an input/output table with some research institutes in China; Czechoslovakia and Finland were finalizing a bilateral comparison on total consumption of the population; and Cuba and Mexico were considering the organization of bilateral comparisons of SNA and MPS aggregates.

67. The Commission noted that three meetings were planned for 1989 at which the subject of SNA/MPS links would be discussed: in March, a seminar organized by the CMEA secretariat, at Prague; in May, a meeting of the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances of the Conference of European Statisticians, at Geneva; and in December, the expert group meeting on SNA/MPS links, at Moscow.

Action taken by the Commission

68. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the new orientation of the work on SNA/MPS links, with a view to making SNA and MPS more applicable to countries with different social and economic systems, and recommended that the subject be given attention in the forthcoming meetings on SNA/MPS links;

(b) Endorsed the continuation of the work on the linking of SNA and MPS carried out by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, in conjunction with regional commissions and appropriate international organizations, particularly with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, aiming at integrating the two systems;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a report on progress made in the harmonization of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of the Balances of the National Economy (MPS).

Chapter IV

SERVICE STATISTICS

69. The Commission considered item 5 of its agenda at its 426th and 427th meetings, on 8 and 9 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on plans for the further development of service statistics, including international trade in services (E/CN.3/1989/7) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22). Three background documents were also made available to the members of the Commission: a summary of the replies to the United Nations/IMF questionnaire on trade in services; preliminary conclusions on the results of the inquiry on national practices and views in respect of the quantity and price indices of services; and the report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics on its third meeting (Wiesbaden, Federal Republic of Germany, October 1988).

70. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the amount of the work completed and reconfirmed the importance and priority it attached to the development of service statistics.

71. The Commission was pleased to note the progress achieved by the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics and welcomed the intention of the volunteer countries in association with the participating international organizations to continue their efforts in promoting methodology and international comparability in the field of service statistics. It took note with satisfaction of the fact that the programme of work of the Voorburg Group was entirely in accord with the priorities expressed by the Statistical Commission.

72. It was noted, however, that in spite of its valuable contributions, the Voorburg Group could not replace the traditional methods of development of statistical methodology (regional meetings, consultant studies, expert group meetings). A more intensive involvement of developing countries in that work was considered highly desirable. In addition, the Secretariat was urged to find appropriate arrangements for implementing a more comprehensive programme of activities, including data compilation and technical co-operation as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/7). It was noted, however, that without resolving the funding problems, the programme would make little or no headway. The Commission urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to pursue, in co-operation with other international organizations, efforts to obtain the necessary resources to implement the comprehensive programme.

73. Several participants commented on the issue of the concept of services. While some of them considered that a unique service concept should be used in all statistics, others were of the view that different statistics might (or should) use different service concepts. The Commission considered that further clarification of the subject would be desirable.

74. Several participants welcomed the progress made in the methodology of quantity and price indices of services, expressed their full support for the continuation of that work and requested the Secretariat to accelerate its work with the ultimate aim of formulating agreed international guidelines. In that connection, several

countries offered their assistance in preparing selected materials as portions of draft recommendations in that field.

75. With regard to priorities for further work on the methodological development of service statistics, a wide range of views was expressed. On balance, the Commission considered that general problems of service statistics should get higher priority than problems of particular service industries. Although no consensus was reached on priorities, all three areas of service statistics received substantial support. Among the specific fields of services, the most support was expressed for work on the guidelines on the statistics of financial, business and information services.

76. The need for co-ordination in the work on service statistics among the various international organizations was recognized, especially work on statistics of trade in services. The Commission was pleased to learn that a number of international organizations and bodies (the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Bank, IMF, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Tourism Organization, OECD and EEC) as well as a number of regional commissions intended to continue their work in the area of trade in services.

Action taken by the Commission

77. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the continuation of the work on service statistics, including trade in services, in appropriate co-ordination with other international organizations;

(b) Welcomed the continuation of the contributions of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics;

(c) Agreed that an item on service statistics should be included in the agenda of its twenty-sixth session and that the related documentation should include a review of work done by national and international agencies in the field of service statistics prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat; and invited the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics to prepare a report on a substantive topic;

(d) Requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with international organizations, to seek extrabudgetary funding to support a comprehensive programme involving methodological development, data compilation and technical co-operation to advance work in the important new field of service statistics.

Chapter V

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATIONS

A. International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification (CPC)

78. The Commission considered item 6 (a) of its agenda at its 423rd, 424th, 431st and 434th meetings, on 7, 13 and 15 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the revision and harmonization of international economic classifications (E/CN.3/1989/8) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22). Two draft classifications were made available to the Commission: the final draft of the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev.3 (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/4/Rev.3 and Add.1 and 2) and the final draft of the Central Product Classification (CPC) (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/77 and Add.1).

79. The Commission was pleased to learn that since its previous session two expert group meetings had been held with the aim of finalizing the draft ISIC, Revision 3, and the draft provisional CPC. It also learned that after the drafts had been circulated, several comments were received from national statistical offices and from participants in international meetings. A summary of the comments, along with the Secretariat's proposals for dealing with them, was made available to the Commission. Additional contributions received from members of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, including explanatory material on CPC, were also made available to the Commission.

80. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat of the work it had accomplished since the Commission's previous session in respect of the two major classifications and in preparing the supporting documentation on the issues and problems involved. It noted that the numerous improvements made, particularly in the service area, had been the result of a combined effort on the part of many experts and organizations and it complimented all who had participated in it. The Commission reaffirmed the importance of the two classifications and their co-ordinating role in economic statistics.

81. The Commission adopted ISIC, Revision 3 and the provisional CPC, modified to take into account the Commission's views. In dealing with comments received since the finalization of the drafts, the Commission recommended that only changes and corrections on the basis of principles, decisions or conventions already agreed upon at recent expert group meetings should be accepted. Several corrections and revisions to the introduction to CPC were brought to the Commission's attention and it was agreed that they should be made.

82. The Commission recommended that both classifications be disseminated widely and that adequate assistance be given to countries in implementing them. The Commission also recommended that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat collect examples of national experience in implementing the classifications so as to make them available to other interested countries. It recognized, however, that to implement ISIC, Revision 3, and CPC in all their details would require great efforts on the part of developing countries.

83. The Commission agreed on the following timetable for finalizing the draft classifications for publication: comments on the Secretariat's proposals concerning the treatment of proposed changes were to be received before the end of March; and suggestions for corrections and editorial changes, particularly to translations, before the end of May. The Commission also stressed the need for printed versions in all the official languages of the United Nations.

84. In adopting ISIC, Revision 3, the Commission emphasized the need for the definitions of the statistical units in ISIC, taking into account the different timeframe for the revision of SNA, to be in conformity with the definitions to be adopted in the revised SNA. In particular, it was recommended that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat make every effort to reconcile the views of the ISIC and SNA experts. It was agreed that the part of the introduction to ISIC dealing with statistical units needed to be redrafted, taking into account the above-mentioned comments and comments made by the SNA expert group, the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics and the Roundtable Conference on Business Survey Frames. By that means it was hoped that a renewed discussion on the subject would be avoided when the revised SNA was before the Commission.

85. It was agreed that ISIC should make clear the distinction between the definition of the ideal statistical unit and the operational definition reflecting real world circumstances. The definitions should be sufficiently clear and complete to serve users as a guide on the treatment of exceptions to the strict definitions of the units. The distinction between statistical units and reporting units should also be clarified.

86. The need to identify ancillary units as separate entities was brought into question. Either ancillary activities were carried out within an establishment, or the unit became autonomous - thus, a separate establishment. There was agreement that ancillary activities, rather than ancillary units, should be treated in the introduction to ISIC.

87. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the annexes on energy and tourism. The importance of a common definition of tourism was emphasized as an aid to world-wide comparability of data on tourism, which was an important sector in the economy of many developing countries. With regard to annexes to ISIC and CPC, the view was expressed that an annex for the information sector would be useful to meet future needs.

88. Regarding the interpretative rules to CPC, the Commission agreed that for transportable goods, those rules should not differ even slightly from the rules of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS). The representative of the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) offered to provide an improved version of the rules in May, at the latest, taking into account the fact that they were going to be used not only for foreign trade statistics but also for production and service statistics. In respect of the indexes, the Commission was informed that the alphabetical index to HS had been published in November 1987 and that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat was preparing the indexes for the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), Revision 3, in co-operation with CCC. The latter organization also offered to co-operate in preparing the indexes to CPC.

89. Several members noted that for countries whose own national classifications differed from ISIC, the implementation of ISIC and CPC was often difficult, even at an aggregate level. Countries had to develop conversion keys between ISIC and CPC and their national classifications. Others expressed the need for the development of conversion keys or common aggregates to maximize comparability between ISIC, Revision 3, and CPC, on the one hand, and national or regional classifications, on the other.

90. Concerning procedures for future revisions, preference was expressed for continuous updating rather than major revisions undertaken after long periods of time. The recommendation was also made for the review of CPC in the light of the experience gained by countries in the revision of their national classifications. Countries were requested to provide information on their experience to the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat.

91. Differing views were expressed on the definition of statistical units. One view was that ISIC was developed in principle for use in industry - that is production statistics, where the establishment was the most appropriate unit. The establishment should therefore occupy the most prominent place in the introduction to ISIC, and other units should be given a lesser role. In the definition of "unit", autonomy of decision-making should be the most important criterion, rather than homogeneity, data availability or locality. In its current form, ISIC did not provide guidance on the trade-off between those criteria, and users were forced to develop their own hierarchy. Other members of the Commission recognized that there was a strong correlation between autonomy and homogeneity. Another view was that an approach in line with the draft that was discussed at the expert group meeting in April 1988 should be taken. The view was also expressed that a prudent approach should be followed, since radical changes in the definitions might not always imply improvements.

92. Attention was drawn to the ongoing discussion within EEC on the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities (NACE) and the related product classification, which, as had been agreed in the expert groups, would be identical to or an extension of ISIC and CPC, respectively. Since it was not certain that the further breakdown in NACE could be accommodated in such a way that identity between ISIC and NACE would be preserved at the three-digit and four-digit levels, it was suggested that the introduction to ISIC be redrafted to say that the coding systems would as far as possible be the same.

93. The representative of the Customs Co-operation Council informed the Commission that there were currently 50 contracting parties to the Harmonized System Convention. The close relationship between HS and CPC was welcomed. Statisticians from member States and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat were invited to participate in the meetings of the Review Sub-Committee for updating HS.

94. The Commission was informed by the representative of the European Communities that an initiative had been taken to harmonize the activity and product classifications of certain other industrialized countries in order to satisfy their needs for more detailed information that would become available from ISIC and CPC. It was stressed that the points of departure for such an exercise would be ISIC and CPC and that every effort would be made to maintain as close a relationship as

possible with those classifications. In that respect, contacts had already been made with Canada, Japan and the United States of America.

Action taken by the Commission

95. The Commission:

(a) Approved the final draft of the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev.3 (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/4/Rev.3 and Add.1 and 2), modified to take into account comments by the Commission;

(b) Approved the final draft of the provisional Central Product Classification (PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/77 and Add.1), modified to take into account comments by the Commission;

(c) Approved the following timetable for finalizing the draft classifications for publication: comments on the Secretariat's proposals concerning the treatment of proposed changes to be received before the end of March, and suggestions for corrections and editorial changes, particularly on translations, before the end of May;

(d) Requested the Secretary-General:

(i) To prepare a publication on ISIC, Revision 3, together with indexes and correlation tables between that classification, the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS), SITC, Revision 3, and the provisional CPC, based on documents PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/4/Rev.3 and Add.1 and 2, in the light of the conclusions of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session;

(ii) To prepare a publication on CPC, with explanatory notes, for the services part of the classification, as a provisional document, based on documents PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/77 and Add.1, in the light of the conclusions of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session;

(iii) To publish and circulate ISIC, Revision 3, and CPC, and to draw them to the attention of States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies;

(e) Recommended that member States adopt ISIC, Revision 3, with such modifications as might be necessary to meet national requirements without disturbing the framework of the classification; or use ISIC, Revision 3, in reporting data according to kind of economic activity for the purpose of international comparison;

(f) Recommended that member States make use of the Central Product Classification as a provisional classification in order to gain experience in obtaining international comparability for data according to goods and services;

(g) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a progress report on the experience of countries in the implementation of the Central Product Classification;

(h) Recommended that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat provide guidance to countries in implementing the recommendations, including the provision of necessary technical co-operation and supplementary documentation.

96. At the 431st meeting, on 13 February, the representative of Egypt, on behalf of Egypt, Ghana, Japan, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, introduced a draft resolution (E/CN.3/1989/L.5) entitled "International economic classifications".

97. At its 434th meeting, on 15 February, the Commission adopted the draft resolution, as orally amended (see chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution I).

B. International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

98. The Commission considered item 6 (b) of its agenda at its 424th meeting on 7 February 1989. It had before it the report of the International Labour Office on the International Classification of Status in Employment (E/CN.3/1989/9).

99. The Commission was informed that the objective of the report was to stimulate discussion on the desirability of revising the existing International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE). That goal would be facilitated if countries could provide the International Labour Office with detailed information concerning the current classification of status in employment and also the names of national experts dealing with the topic, so that it could correspond with them.

100. The Commission strongly supported the proposed work on ICSE and expressed its appreciation to the International Labour Office for preparing a very sound discussion paper on the subject. Many members and organizations expressed deep interest in the proposed review of the existing concepts and structure of ICSE and indicated their readiness to provide information, including written comments, and to participate informally in the network(s) that might be established to further that work.

101. In the extensive discussions that followed, a wide range of problems faced in the use of the current classification were touched upon by members, reflecting national experiences of changing employment patterns and the nature of national legal systems. Those factors had given rise to difficulties in the precise identification and classification of, for instance, unpaid family workers, casual workers and paid workers who were also self-employed (i.e., multistatus workers). As a result, a large number of them had been included in a residual category, such as "not stated", or merged with other categories.

102. Several members pointed out that the existing ICSE did not clearly reflect the real situation and failed to take adequate account of conditions, in both planned economies and mixed economies. A range of additional dimensions, including working contract, type of remuneration involved, location of work and control over means of production should be examined with a view to avoiding ambiguity and/or to improving the concepts and classification.

103. The Commission noted the existing close co-operation between the International Labour Office and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat on the matter and stressed the necessity of continuing that collaboration in a number of fields of statistics, particularly population and housing censuses and surveys. It

was therefore considered important that the Commission be kept informed of the progress of work on ICSE, being necessarily involved in any proposals for its revision.

104. Members also emphasized that ICSE should remain distinct, without overlap with the revised industrial and occupational classifications. Further, the importance of ICSE to the ongoing work on the revision of SNA and other statistics was stressed.

Action taken by the Commission

105. The Commission:

(a) Strongly endorsed the proposed work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) by the International Labour Office in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other interested organizations and member countries, and supported the strategy of establishing networks and informal groups for that work;

(b) Recommended detailed examination of the classifications of status in employment currently used by countries and of the problems experienced in their application, prior to any revision;

(c) Stressed the importance of taking fully into account the circumstances of different economic systems and of relevant conditions in developing countries, particularly within the informal sector;

(d) Requested the International Labour Office to prepare for the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a report on the progress of work on ICSE, in view of the importance of ICSE to national statistical offices and the work of the Commission;

(e) Requested the Statistical Office to make the report of the International Labour Office (E/CN.3/1989/9) available to the experts involved in the SNA review process.

Chapter VI

PRICE STATISTICS

106. The Commission considered item 7 of its agenda at its 427th meeting, on 9 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the International Comparison Programme (ICP) (E/CN.3/1989/10).

107. The Commission welcomed the work done on phase V of the International Comparison Programme, with 1985 as reference year, which was nearing completion. Results for EEC, OECD and the European Comparison Programme had already been published. Computations had also been finalized for the African comparison, and results which were almost final were available for the ESCAP comparison. A partial and preliminary world comparison covering 57 countries had been compiled jointly by EUROSTAT and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, the summary results of which had been made available to the members of the Commission. The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the progress achieved and noted that completion of the phase V exercise was expected by the end of 1989.

108. As to the methodology of ICP, the Commission considered that, in spite of the impressive progress achieved in the theoretical and methodological work of international comparisons in the past two decades, those working in national statistical offices on ICP had received only limited guidance, since detailed instructions on the work to be carried out were often lacking. To remedy that situation the Commission urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to make arrangements for preparing a handbook on ICP as soon as possible.

109. On particular points of the methodology, the following proposals were made: (a) world comparison results which were additive (i.e., which were calculated on the basis of world average prices) should be published as early as possible after the fixity restriction was lifted; (b) greater importance should be given to the similarity of countries in terms of such factors as climate, type of economic system and level of development when pairing them in carrying out core comparisons.

110. Several participants commented on the uses of ICP results, and some of them expressed concern because the feedback from users on international comparison results was limited. In that connection it was proposed that ICP be more widely publicized, both by national statistical offices and by international organizations. It was also considered that guidelines on how to use ICP results might provide a useful service in getting the public better acquainted with international comparison results.

111. The Commission considered that the long-term goal in the development of ICP should be its full integration with national statistical work. In that way one could reduce considerably the additional burden countries incurred by their participation in the Programme, and that might also substantially promote the more systematic and expanded use of the results of international comparisons.

112. Although many members of the Commission deemed it desirable to continue ICP on a world comparison basis, since no solution to the problems of the core comparisons and the funding of central co-ordination was in sight, it was likely that in phase VI (1990) ICP would consist of regional comparisons only, with some possible

links among them. The task of establishing those links would no longer be the task of a central agency but would be that of the regional organizations involved. Some links could be provided by double participation on the part of particular countries in regional comparisons (as was the case for Austria and Japan in phase V). Whether or not those links would be sound enough to enable the publication of the interregional results without reservations would be decided after the work was completed.

113. The Commission noted that preparatory work in respect of the phase VI comparison in EEC, OECD and Europe Group 2 regions had already started. In those regions the conditions for carrying out the Programme seemed favourable, and the number of participating countries was expected to be somewhat higher than in phase V. The most noteworthy development in those regions was the entry of the Soviet Union into the Programme.

114. The Commission was pleased to note that the Inter-American Development Bank offered substantial support for carrying out a Latin American comparison and that other international organizations (EEC, World Bank) were also considering providing technical assistance for that regional comparison. Spain also expressed its willingness to participate and in that way to provide a link between the Latin American and the EEC/OECD comparisons. The Commission also welcomed Japan's offer to support the ESCAP comparison.

115. In other regions the situation was more uncertain. Since EEC could continue its support for the African and Caribbean comparisons only on a reduced scale, it was not yet clear in which form and with how many participants those regional comparisons would be organized. Although some interest had been expressed by a few countries of the region covered by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in respect of ICP, no arrangements had been made for organizing a comparison in that region.

116. The Commission was of the opinion that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat should retain its co-ordinating role in ICP, even if the world comparison as such were discontinued and there were no central responsibility for the core comparisons. The Statistical Office's responsibility for methodological co-ordination and development, including the dissemination of the technical information, would remain the same as in earlier phases of ICP.

Action taken by the Commission

117. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the continuation of the Programme at least at the regional level and, as a world comparison, if resources permitted, and if it could be carried out in such a way as to ensure the statistical soundness of the comparison;

(b) Reconfirmed the co-ordinating role of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in ICP;

(c) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to convene a meeting of an intersecretariat working group on ICP to review the organizational and other arrangements for phase VI, the report of the group to be

submitted to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination of the Statistical Commission;

(d) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a progress report on developments in phase VI of ICP and on other related international comparison issues;

(e) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to expedite the preparation and dissemination of technical documents connected with ICP methodology and use of ICP data, particularly the handbook on ICP methods.

Chapter VII

DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

A. Population and housing censuses

118. The Commission considered item 8 (a) of its agenda at its 427th and 428th meetings, on 9 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the general development and integration of methodological work (E/CN.3/1989/15).

119. The Commission expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for its methodological work and the preparations made thus far to promote the 1990 round of population and housing censuses. Many members indicated that the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses ^{13/} and other publications prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat were immensely useful for planning their 1990 censuses and urged that such materials be given timely and wide distribution in the future. The need for additional technical reports and training materials or courses focusing on specific topics, for example migration, the economically active population, sampling, special population groups, quality control procedures, data processing and software packages, was stressed.

120. The Commission was informed of a range of national activities in connection with the 1990 round of population and housing censuses. It was pleased to learn that several countries had already taken their census in the 1990 round, making use of United Nations recommendations. In other countries, preparations to carry out the census had already begun and, in some cases, had reached an advanced stage. Governments were urged to commit the resources necessary to carry out a well-run census and the complex operations required to do so.

121. At the same time, it was recognized that many developing countries would require multilateral and bilateral assistance to supplement their own resources. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other multilateral and bilateral agencies that were providing support for country and regional activities in connection with the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme. In addition, the importance of technical co-operation among developing countries was stressed, and several members expressed the readiness of their countries to provide or exchange assistance in connection with the census programme. Co-ordination of technical co-operation at the national and international levels was also emphasized.

122. Several members stressed the importance of the quality of the data collected in population and housing censuses and suggested that increased use be made of post-enumeration surveys and quality control procedures in order to examine both the adequacy of census coverage and content. Concern was also expressed that a balance be maintained between using the census to obtain data on complex topics, such as disability statistics, and keeping the census as simple as possible so as

^{13/} Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 67 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.XVII.8).

not to jeopardize its quality. There was general agreement that the necessary training materials or workshops should be developed for use in the 1990 censuses.

123. The Commission was also informed of regional activities in connection with the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, including the Cairo International Conference on Dissemination and Use of Census Data that took place in October 1988. The Conference had recommended, inter alia, the development of (a) direct videotaped training materials for different types of census activity and (b) a computer-based "expert system" capable of answering administrative, financial and technical questions for use by census managers.

124. The Commission emphasized the importance of new technologies in data processing, publication, dissemination and use of population and housing census data. In that regard, countries were urged, in co-operation with the United Nations and other multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation agencies, to organize training courses and workshops for census users to make effective and maximum use of census data.

125. Sampling in censuses, which had been recommended by the Commission, was observed to be a growing feature of population censuses in many countries. In addition, the use of "long" and "short" forms in enumeration had been increasing in recent censuses. The undertaking of intercensal sample surveys had gradually increased. The Commission urged all countries, within their capability, to make full use of sampling in the different census phases, namely data collection, quality control, data processing, establishment of data bases and dissemination of census data.

126. Finally, the Commission noted that many of the issues discussed under the sub-item "Population and housing censuses" also related to issues discussed under agenda item 10 "Technical co-operation" (see chap. IX).

Action taken by the Commission

127. The Commission:

(a) Noted with satisfaction that countries were making early preparations for the 1990 population and housing censuses and that the United Nations Secretariat, regional commissions and other bodies were taking steps to assist countries in their census work;

(b) Reiterated the importance of census training in all regions and strongly supported technical co-operation activities to improve training in, inter alia, census management, sampling, quality control procedures, data processing and analysis and on topics related to economic characteristics, migration and special population groups, and endorsed the recommendations of the Cairo International Conference on Dissemination and Use of Census Data for the development of videotape training materials and an expert system in census taking;

(c) Urged UNFPA and other multilateral agencies to continue their support to developing countries to enable them to meet national and subnational needs for data in carrying out population and housing censuses;

(d) Urged UNFPA, donor countries and Governments of developing countries to pledge contributions early, so as not to jeopardize target dates of census taking or the completion of preparations;

(e) Stressed the importance of responding to user needs, and urged UNFPA to encourage the holding of conferences between producers and users of census data before and after censuses, in order to ensure full use of the data;

(f) Stressed the importance of the quality of data and recommended that post-enumeration surveys be carried out, whenever possible, and that work be undertaken to establish data bases of census results, including those on special population groups, and to integrate data on special population groups with related socio-economic data;

(g) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a report on progress in the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

B. Social statistics and indicators

128. The Commission considered item 8 (b) of its agenda at its 428th, 429th and 431st meetings, on 9, 10 and 13 February 1989. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on international co-ordination of social statistics and indicators and development of statistics and indicators on special population groups (E/CN.3/1989/11) and on the development of guidelines on national accounts for women's contribution to development (E/CN.3/1989/12).

129. The Commission was encouraged to note increasing awareness of the need for social statistics and indicators in both developed and developing countries in order to assess socio-economic trends and problems and provide relevant inputs for policy formulation and programme management. Previously, less interest had been shown in social statistics in comparison with economic statistics.

130. The Commission discussed a number of issues facing countries in common, including the importance of using population and housing censuses as a basic source of social and related indicators, supplemented by new information from ongoing household survey programmes as specific needs were identified and by civil registration and administrative records; the development of social data bases on microcomputers; the need for statistics on poverty; the importance of understanding and documenting the underlying methodology in each subject field in order to avoid misinterpretation and misuse of indicators; the usefulness of international comparability; and the importance of creating broad, general support for social statistics.

131. A wide range of views were expressed on the importance and feasibility of developing a conceptual framework for integrated social statistics and for indicators. Some members felt that little progress could be made until such an agreed framework was developed. In that connection, the conceptual framework being developed by the World Bank in the context of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project was cited. Others felt that a simple, flexible framework was a necessary and reasonable approach in the absence of a rigorous system. Others suggested that clear statements of policy objectives were a prerequisite for the development of indicators.

132. Various views were also expressed concerning the desirability and usefulness of developing statistical models of social and related economic variables in national statistical work. In some cases, simulation models developed for microcomputers had been a very useful way of providing needed statistics to policy makers that they could put to substantial use in the policy-making process. Those models, based on household survey data, were used to study the impact on social variables of various proposed policy formulations. Use of synthetic data in such models also ensured respect for privacy and confidentiality of social data, which was a major concern in many countries. However, the view was also expressed that such model-building might better be left to policy analysts, especially in developing countries, where the necessary skills were in short supply in statistical services. The Commission agreed, however, that simple conceptual frameworks, analyses and models had been valuable in identifying serious gaps in the available data, pointing to essential improvements in basic data collection programmes and providing an overall vision for work on social information.

133. It was also suggested that a useful approach to work on social statistics and indicators was to press ahead with general statistical compilation and publication at the national level. The nutrition surveillance programme developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was cited as an example of a specialized data collection activity that readily attracted strong funding support and could quickly achieve a flow of much-needed and timely data in developing countries.

134. The Commission expressed strong support for the work of the Statistical Office on methodology and compilation of social statistics and indicators in the general context of monitoring and planning social and economic development and for special population groups, including disadvantaged groups. It cited the usefulness and importance of the work on statistics and indicators on women and on disabled persons. The Commission noted the great interest in countries in those statistics and the importance of international co-operation in improving those statistics at the national and international levels. It stressed the importance for work in developing countries of training and other types of technical co-operation provided by the United Nations and agreed that countries should also share their experience bilaterally. Similar views were expressed concerning the development of statistics on youth, children and the elderly. The Commission welcomed the plans of the United Nations Office at Vienna to organize, in co-operation with the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office, a technical workshop in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on indicators on the situation of families. The Commission also agreed that improvement of statistics on poverty was an urgent need and suggested that it should be given greater emphasis in international work.

135. The Commission also expressed strong support for the continuing work of the Statistical Office in co-ordinating international work on social statistics and indicators, including those on special population groups. It stressed the need to avoid overlapping or inconsistent methodologies and data compilation efforts and to promote international comparability. It also stressed the importance of strong co-ordination of social statistics and indicators at the national level by national statistical offices. As demands for and uses of indicators were multiplying rapidly, for example in connection with special population groups and the measurement of poverty, it was essential to maintain a strong co-ordinating framework within which series and indicators for a wide range of uses and users could be developed on a cost-effective basis.

136. The Commission noted the great demand at the national and international levels for statistics on disabled persons and commended the work of the Statistical Office in the development of methodology and compilation. National experience had shown the value of population censuses and surveys for collecting those data and had demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of using, where feasible, one or two broad disability questions in the population census as a basis for designing and implementing a more in-depth survey.

137. The Commission also emphasized the importance of improved presentation and dissemination of social statistics and indicators. For example, relatively compact, attractive and frequent publications on general indicators or statistics and on indicators on women and special population groups had found very wide popularity in countries when aimed at a non-statistical and non-specialized audience. Disaggregation of indicators to regional levels was also considered useful. Many countries had set up special units in their statistical offices to assemble available data on, for example, women and children, for policy makers. The Commission stressed that developing countries should focus to the extent possible on a minimum core of indicators necessary for policy-making to avoid diffusion of effort.

138. The Commission noted with interest the priority given by UNICEF to designing and promoting indicators closely related to specific aspects of human welfare, including, in its own fields of concern, infant and child mortality, immunization and malnutrition. Such indicators should be based on data collection and compilation programmes, most importantly household surveys, designed to monitor short-term trends and provide results quickly and efficiently. The Commission agreed that considerable efforts should be made to ensure the collection of data and compilation of indicators needed for monitoring human aspects of development in preparation for the fourth United Nations development decade.

139. In its discussion of the methodological development of economic accounts on women's contribution to development to supplement the System of National Accounts, undertaken by the Statistical Office and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women pursuant to the recommendations of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, ^{14/} the Commission agreed that a technical report on methods of compilation, valuation and analysis in that field would be of great value to countries. The report should be aimed at assisting countries interested in developing their own statistics in that field and ultimately at providing national planners with a complete picture of production in the informal and household sectors, and of important activities in households outside the production boundary. The Commission stressed the need to improve understanding of women's roles in the economy, to rectify inequities in women's economic situations and to provide a more accurate and comprehensive basis for social and economic planning.

140. The Commission cautioned that there were considerable technical and conceptual challenges in such an undertaking and that it was unrealistic to expect that they

^{14/} Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

could be thoroughly resolved in the foreseeable future. Thus, the work should proceed in parallel to work on revision of the System of National Accounts but should not interfere with the objectives and principles established in the revision process. The Commission further pointed out that there were serious problems of data availability for that work in countries. The data collected were fragmentary and difficult to access and use. Far too few economic data were available by sex, even where they would be relatively easy to prepare. The Commission strongly supported the development of statistics on use of time as one of the most effective means of filling in the most critical gaps.

Action taken by the Commission

141. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the programmes of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in co-ordinating international work on social statistics, including the new emphasis on the measurement of poverty, and on the development of statistics on women, children, youth, the elderly, the disabled and other special population groups;

(b) Recommended that further work in the Statistical Office focus on the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest at the national and international levels and that a progress report on the subject be submitted to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session;

(c) Agreed that a concerted effort should be made in the United Nations system to develop and disseminate appropriate methodologies for the compilation of indicators to assess human factors and social impacts of development in connection with the preparations for the fourth United Nations development decade;

(d) Recommended that national and international statistical services ensure that social statistics and indicators essential for reliable monitoring of human factors and social impacts of development were collected and disseminated in non-technical form on a frequent and timely basis and in a comparable form;

(e) Recommended that national and international statistical services give full attention to the development of statistics on special population groups, including children, youth, the elderly and the disabled and on the situation of families, and to the measurement of poverty, and that technical co-operation in those fields be made available to countries;

(f) Commended the Statistical Office and other multilateral and bilateral donors for the technical co-operation services and support that had been provided to developing countries for the development of social statistics and indicators, including statistics on women, children, youth, the elderly, the disabled and other special population groups, and recommended that those services be further strengthened;

(g) Endorsed the programme of the Statistical Office, carried out in co-operation with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Office at Vienna and other interested agencies, on the developing of statistics and indicators on women, including

statistics on the informal sector and women's contributions to development, and the preparation of a technical report on methods of compiling economic accounts and tables on women's contributions to production.

C. Environment statistics

142. The Commission considered item 8 (c) of its agenda at its 432nd meeting, on 13 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on environment statistics (E/CN.3/1989/13) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22).

143. The Commission reaffirmed the high priority it had attached to the environment statistics programme at previous sessions and regretted that the programme was still facing serious resource constraints. It considered that pressing environmental concerns in both industrialized and developing countries made it even more important than previously to develop and implement sound and effective environment statistics programmes at the national and international levels.

144. The importance of continuing the methodological work was stressed by the Commission. It welcomed progress made in the preparation of technical reports on statistics of the environmental aspects of human settlements ^{15/} and on statistics of the natural environment, and expressed its appreciation of the assistance provided by Statistics Canada.

145. The need to develop statistics that described the interactions between environmental concerns and socio-economic growth and development was stressed by the Commission. General support was expressed for efforts aimed at the integration of environmental issues into the framework of the System of National Accounts by means of environmental satellite accounts. The Commission attached high priority to that programme and welcomed the joint efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat regarding the development of a framework for environmental satellite accounting. The need to further extend the dialogue between statisticians, national accountants, resource economists and environmentalists in that field of work was stressed. The Commission was pleased to learn that the Statistical Office was able to secure extrabudgetary resources to develop the first draft of an environmental accounting handbook. The representative of the World Bank indicated the Bank's intention to test the methodologies on environmental accounting in case studies of country applications.

146. Various delegations described their experiences in and plans for collecting and disseminating environment statistics and related indicators in their respective countries. The Commission was also informed about progress made by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in the implementation of regional programmes of environment statistics and about similar or related activities of other international organizations. A number of

^{15/} Concepts and Methods of Environment Statistics: Human Settlements Statistics - A Technical Report, Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 51 (United Nations publication, Sales No.E.88.XVII.4).

representatives expressed regret that the regional programmes had not so far been extended to all the regions owing to the lack of resources available to the regional commissions.

147. The suggestion was made that high priority should be given to the harmonization and expansion of global environmental monitoring in order to assist in the assessment of international environmental problems. The view was also expressed that there was a need to collect project-oriented environmental data at the micro-level in view of the site-specific nature of most environmental issues, including the dumping of toxic waste outside the country of origin.

148. Close co-operation between ECE and the Statistical Office should be maintained on the question of the lead data bases, as well as on the methodological development of environment statistics. A second consultative meeting on the co-ordination of environment statistics, to take place in March 1989, was announced by the representative of ECE. The Commission reiterated its view, already expressed during the discussion of agenda item 3 (a) (see chap. II, sect. A), that some outputs of the work on methods of environment statistics of the Conference of European Statisticians might contribute to work at the global level.

149. The Commission emphasized the need to strengthen the leadership and co-ordinating role of the Statistical Office in environment statistics, a field of statistics that was developing rapidly. The identification of lead data bases for statistical data collection was considered to be an efficient tool for avoiding duplication of efforts and should be closely monitored and co-ordinated by the Statistical Office with the assistance of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. As far as the further development of the methodological work in the field of environment statistics was concerned, the Commission noted the necessity of establishing a set of high-priority programmes and of appropriate organizations to carry out the programmes. It urged that the matter be included in the report to be prepared by the Statistical Office for submission to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session. That set of programmatic suggestions should also be reviewed by the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities.

150. The Commission recognized that the implementation of the work programme of the Statistical Office would require the allocation of substantial additional resources, which would have to be obtained from extrabudgetary sources. The Commission noted that approaches to UNEP and its Governing Council to secure financial support for a global programme on environment statistics, requested by the Commission at its twenty-fourth session, had not so far been successful. The establishment of a working group, along the lines of the Voorburg Group, which was experienced in service statistics, consisting of specialists from interested Governments, was suggested as a means of accelerating the environment statistics programme of the Statistical Office. Ways and means would need to be found to ensure the participation of developing countries in that effort.

151. The Commission was pleased to note that planned co-operation with the International Statistical Institute appeared to be leading to the preparation of video material on environment statistics for training purposes. Possible collaboration with the regional commissions in the areas of energy and environment statistics was envisaged by the Institute.

152. The Commission expressed the need for environmental statistical classifications, since members felt that work in the field of the environment should be project oriented.

Action taken by the Commission

153. The Commission:

(a) Confirmed the continuing high priority of the environment statistics programme;

(b) Expressed its appreciation of the progress made in the preparation of technical reports on environment statistics and requested that that work continue;

(c) Commended the joint efforts of UNEP, the World Bank, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other organizations on the linkage of environmental accounting to the System of National Accounts by means of satellite accounts and endorsed the preparation of a handbook on environmental accounting;

(d) Requested that support be given to the regional commissions in the implementation of their environment statistics programmes, with a view to enabling the participation of those commissions that had not yet embarked on a regional programme of environment statistics;

(e) Recommended that a group of specialists from interested countries should be established to assist the Statistical Office in the development and implementation of the environment statistics programme on the understanding that ways would be found to enable both developed and developing countries to participate;

(f) Stressed the need to strengthen the co-ordinating role of the Statistical Office in the development of concepts, methods and classifications of environment statistics, the development and use of international environmental data bases and the promotion of regional programmes of environment statistics;

(g) Stressed the need for securing extrabudgetary resources or otherwise mobilizing external support for rapid implementation of the environment statistics programme of the Statistical Office and the regional commissions;

(h) Requested that a report on methods of environment statistics, developed under the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians, be submitted to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session;

(i) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a report on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans in that regard.

D. Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development

154. The Commission considered item 8 (d) of its agenda at its 431st and 434th meetings, on 13 and 15 February 1989. It had before it the report of the

Secretary-General and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) entitled "Development of indicators on patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development" (E/CN.3/1989/14).

155. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the work done by UNRISD and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in that field, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/179. It agreed that there was an urgent need for methodological work on indicators to assess qualitative aspects of development in the long term and in connection with the preparations for the fourth United Nations development decade. The case studies undertaken by UNRISD would be very valuable in identifying data sources and gaps relative to the needed indicators. It was suggested that the case-studies currently under way should be expanded in terms of country coverage to include countries which had collected suitable socio-economic data. The Commission also emphasized the importance of future basic research on the development process. Members expressed their concern that development should be considered as a whole, including economic, technological and social development. It noted that such research might draw on the related research efforts of the World Bank and other organizations.

156. The Commission also noted the need for reviewing a wide range of development indicators and asked that all of the interested agencies of the United Nations system should be consulted to further develop the list of series and classifications for indicators contained in annex I to document E/CN.3/1989/14. Previous work on development indicators and basic needs by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank, as well as in the Handbook on Social Indicators ^{16/} should be taken into account in the review.

157. The Commission noted with appreciation the proposal of the Government of Morocco to act as host to a meeting of a group of high-level experts and interested members of the Commission to review the work on indicators. The Commission agreed that such a meeting could be a useful forum for synthesizing national and international experiences and objectives. It stressed that the experts invited should come from countries at all levels of development.

158. The Commission also expressed its concern that further work in the field should be fully co-ordinated and complementary with existing national and international programmes on social statistics and indicators. It agreed that the programmes of FAO and the World Bank would be of special relevance and should be taken into account in the preparation of the report submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session. Given the severe constraints on resources in those programmes, maximum integration and consistency were essential. It also agreed that further work would have to be carried out on the basis of extrabudgetary funds and urged interested donors to provide the resources needed for the work. The Commission agreed that in developing countries, special attention to strengthening their capacity and to improving dissemination and analysis capabilities for social statistics and indicators was needed if any lasting results were to be achieved. It also noted the great technical difficulties countries faced in developing indicators appropriate to the diversity

^{16/} Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 49 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.XVII.6).

of cultural, geographical and economic traditions and circumstances within countries.

Action by the Commission

159. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the work undertaken by UNRISD and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/179;

(b) Urged interested donors to provide extrabudgetary funds for UNRISD to increase the number of its case studies to ensure representation from as many geographical regions as possible and include developing countries at various levels of development;

(c) Requested UNRISD to make the necessary contacts with the Government of Morocco and other interested organizations, including the World Bank and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in order to convene a meeting of high-level experts on development indicators to review the results of the work in progress and to explore the availability of extrabudgetary resources;

(d) Emphasized that the whole issue of development should be dealt with, including social, economic, technological and environmental aspects, and treated in the light of their interrelationship, even if the different areas were addressed separately;

(e) Requested the Secretary-General and UNRISD to prepare, in close co-operation with the other organizations involved, a final report on the case-studies and qualitative aspects of development for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session, as a basis for reporting to the Economic and Social Council.

160. At the 431st meeting, on 13 February, the representative of Morocco introduced a draft resolution (E/CN.3/1989/L.6) entitled "Patterns of consumption and qualitative indicators of development".

161. At its 434th meeting, on 15 February, the Commission adopted the draft resolution, as orally amended (see chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution II).

Chapter VIII

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF METHODOLOGICAL WORK

162. The Commission considered item 9 of its agenda at its 432nd meeting, on 13 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work (E/CN.3/1989/15).

Action taken by the Commission

163. The Commission:

(a) Took note of the report of the Secretary-General and agreed that comments should be submitted in writing to the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat; the Statistical Office would prepare a summary of the comments for submission to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination at its thirteenth session;

(b) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its twenty-sixth session, a further report on general development and integration of methodological work.

Chapter IX

TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION

A. Technical co-operation in statistics

164. The Commission considered item 10 (a) of its agenda at its 429th meeting, on 10 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on technical co-operation activities in statistics (E/CN.3/1989/16) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22).

165. The Commission was of the opinion that technical co-operation was a subject of paramount concern. It stressed that the output of an effective national statistical system was essential for sound development planning and programmes. Technical co-operation programmes in statistics and statistical data processing had enabled many developing countries to strengthen their national statistical capabilities and outputs.

166. The Commission was pleased to observe that the overall level of funding for technical co-operation programmes in statistics of the United Nations system had increased during the past year and that a further increase was expected with the support from UNFPA for country projects related to the 1990 round of population and housing censuses. The Commission was also pleased to learn of other multilateral and bilateral programmes of technical co-operation in statistics in various regions and countries.

167. The Commission noted that statistical training was an area of continuing importance and urged the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to make every effort to ensure that the greatest attention was given to the training component in their technical co-operation activities. It expressed concern that in technical co-operation projects executed by the United Nations, the share of resources available for economic statistics was diminishing and urged that efforts be made to strengthen technical co-operation in that area.

168. The Commission also stressed the importance of further strengthening the capabilities of developing countries in statistical data processing and informatics. It was pleased to note the extensive efforts to that end made by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, with substantive support from the Statistical Office, as well as the efforts of other multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation agencies. It emphasized that support was required for hardware, software and a diverse range of training needs. In that connection, the Commission urged the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development to foster the establishment of regional training centres for data systems and informatics. The Commission was pleased to note the efforts being made by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office in providing training to statisticians in the use of ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) software for processing customs data and obtaining statistical outputs.

169. The Commission acknowledged with satisfaction the improvement in the scope and content of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/16). The report provided a useful overview of the activities being undertaken. A number of suggestions for further improving the report were made: presenting information on expenditures in real terms; bringing out more clearly the full extent of expenditures on training, since significant expenditures now classified under personnel or equipment might actually be devoted to training; ensuring that agencies contributing information had an opportunity to review the tabular information in the report before it was made final; and finding a way of including information on the expenditures of recipient countries on technical co-operation projects. However, in view of the resource limitations in the Statistical Office and the 24-page limitation on documents, the Commission recognized that it might not be possible to implement all those suggestions.

170. The Commission was pleased to learn that an updated edition of the Directory of Technical Co-operation in Statistics (ST/ESA/STAT/105/Rev.2) would be issued shortly. It noted that the Directory, which included information on technical co-operation in statistics available from bilateral and multilateral agencies, would be useful for developing countries seeking international assistance.

171. The Commission noted with appreciation the International Statistical Institute's effort to develop a series of educational video-cassettes on various aspects of statistical work for use in statistical training in interested countries. It commended the Statistical Office's collaboration in that project, which was intended to meet the needs of countries, particularly of statistically less developed countries, in a cost-effective way.

172. The Commission noted that in recent years the Statistical Office had assisted countries in strengthening their statistical systems through technical co-operation related to new areas or developments in statistics, including new initiatives in civil registration and vital statistics and statistics on women, disabled persons and other special population groups. The Commission endorsed such efforts.

173. The Commission stressed the importance of proper co-ordination in achieving a sound and cost-effective technical co-operation effort. It noted that a variety of co-ordination mechanisms existed, as already discussed under agenda item 3 (a) (see chap. II, sect. A) and stressed once again the critical role of the recipient country in the co-ordination process. It also recognized the importance of co-ordination among organizations providing technical co-operation in statistics. It emphasized that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat should continue to serve as the focal point in promoting the co-ordination of technical co-operation projects in statistics. To that end, it welcomed the proposal that the Statistical Office routinely obtain summary information on ongoing and planned activities from national statistical offices and others providing technical co-operation in statistics and disseminate it on request. The Commission was pleased to learn of the co-ordinating activities of UNFPA in the broad field of population, including basic data collection.

Action taken by the Commission

174. The Commission:

- (a) Stressed the importance it attached to technical co-operation programmes with developing countries and endorsed the current technical co-operation activities in statistics carried out by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development with the substantive support of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat;
- (b) Stressed the importance of a balanced programme of technical co-operation covering economic, social and demographic statistics and statistical organization and management;
- (c) Emphasized the continued need for support for statistical data processing and informatics;
- (d) Emphasized the importance of the training component in the implementation of country projects and urged that resources allocated to that component be increased;
- (e) Recommended that the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development take the lead, in co-operation with the Statistical Office, in promoting capacities in data systems and informatics technology;
- (f) Expressed its support for new initiatives in technical co-operation related to the generation of trade statistics, educational video-cassettes, civil registration and vital statistics, and statistics on women and disabled persons;
- (g) Stressed the importance of co-ordination in multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation statistical activities and urged the Statistical Office to play a leading role in promoting such co-ordination in collaboration with other international organizations;
- (h) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a report on technical co-operation in statistics, taking into account in so far as possible the suggestions made by the Commission at its twenty-fifth session.

B. Current state of statistics and statistical development in developing countries

175. The Commission considered item 10 (b) of its agenda at its 431st meeting, on 13 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the current state of statistics and statistical development in developing countries (E/CN.3/1989/17).

176. The Commission was of the opinion that the report was useful and agreed that the topic was of continuing interest to both multilateral and bilateral donors and to developing countries that were recipients of technical co-operation in statistics. The Commission recalled the fact that the topic had been discussed during the past two sessions of the Commission.

177. The Commission welcomed the efforts made by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to show in the report the progress made by countries. Some representatives, however, were of the opinion that the report did not go far enough, especially since the data on the availability of statistics for the subject-matter areas listed were provided only up to 1980. One representative said that no data about availability of debt or other financial statistics had been included and stressed that that would have been useful to international organizations whose work covered those subjects. Another representative said that the information provided for certain subject-matter areas, such as health, was somewhat misleading, since such areas covered a variety of units and the information might refer only to some of those units. In addition, for one region, data availability for a limited number of countries was included because some countries had very few statistics, and primary development work in statistics had only just begun in those countries. The Commission also noted the inability of developing countries to provide information on the total amount of technical co-operation activities in statistics they received.

178. The Commission was of the opinion that the report would have been more useful if it had addressed in more detail the timeliness, quality and coverage of statistics obtained from the developing countries. A few representatives, however, noted that lack of timely statistics from developing countries was widely recognized and that quality was difficult to measure. The representative of ESCAP referred to a recent seminar held in the region at which timeliness and quality of statistics was discussed and suggested that the report of the seminar might provide useful ideas that could be applicable to developing countries in other regions.

179. Despite the limitations of the report of the Secretary-General, the Commission was in broad agreement with the strategies proposed concerning (a) identification of the value of statistics, (b) a balanced approach to technical co-operation, (c) statistical training, (d) data processing, (e) technical advice to countries, (f) statistical organization and management, (g) co-ordination of technical co-operation activities and (h) the needs of the statistically least developed countries. The Commission noted that although the report did not explicitly refer to bilateral technical co-operation activities in statistics, the conclusions that could be drawn from the bilateral programmes generally supported those strategies. The Commission also noted that the preparation and dissemination of manuals and other methodological materials for use by developing countries should have been included among the strategies proposed.

180. The Commission re-emphasized its opinion that co-ordination of technical co-operation activities in statistics was very important, and stressed that there was a need for effective co-ordination of those activities. One representative noted that it would have been helpful if the report had suggested some practical ways by which co-ordination could be achieved.

181. The Commission believed that the suggested emphasis on further strengthening regional and subregional advisory services should not be interpreted to indicate that there was no longer a need for resident country experts. In addition, several representatives recalled the fact that the strategies proposed in the report had been the subject of discussion over many years and said they would have liked the report to have contained a discussion on the extent to which those strategies had led to improvement, not only in the range of statistics provided by the developing countries but also in the timely availability of those statistics and their quality. The Commission noted that because of the limitation in the amount of

resources available, it was difficult to prepare a more detailed and extensive report that would adequately address all the concerns expressed.

Action taken by the Commission

182. The Commission:

(a) Expressed its appreciation of the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in trying to assess the current state of statistics and statistical development in developing countries;

(b) Noted the limitations of the content of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/1989/17) and expressed the opinion that it would have been more useful if resources had been available so that the report could have included references to quality, timeliness and coverage, additional subject-matter areas such as debt and financial transactions, and could have addressed more explicitly certain subject-matter areas such as health;

(c) Endorsed the strategies proposed in the report as useful guides for multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation in statistics.

C. National Household Survey Capability Programme

183. The Commission considered item 10 (c) of its agenda at its 430th meeting, on 10 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the long-range future of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (E/CN.3/1989/18).

184. The Commission recognized with appreciation the progress made by the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) over the past decade and, in particular, the world-wide interest it had generated in the role of household surveys as a means of collecting much needed information on the demographic, social and socio-economic aspects of household populations. It also emphasized the continued relevance of NHSCP as an instrument for providing the means to monitor the implementation of the proposed new international development strategy as well as the progress achieved in attaining targets called for in various other development initiatives.

185. The Commission noted that the Programme, currently in operation in 30 developing countries, had made considerable progress during the past two years and was well set to meet the target coverage of 45 countries by 1991 in accordance with the plan of operations approved by its Programme Review Committee. It also noted with appreciation the proposal to organize subregional projects for areas, such as the Caribbean which, if successful, could be extended to other similarly situated groups of smaller countries. The Commission expressed its appreciation to UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF and the bilateral donor agencies which provide financial support to the NHSCP country survey programmes.

186. The Commission indicated great interest in, and appreciation of, the high quality of the series of technical studies, guidelines and manuals already published or at various stages of preparation and suggested for consideration similar studies on (a) estimation of sampling and non-sampling errors and

(b) methodology for the effective coverage of elusive population groups and infrequent occurrences. It also welcomed the proposals to organize interregional, regional and subregional workshops and training programmes to introduce and promote the use of those studies and, in that context as well as in other forms of capability building, suggested technical co-operation among developing countries wherever possible.

187. The Commission emphasized the need for proper documentation and wide dissemination of the survey experience of NHSCP participants and welcomed in that connection the revival of the NHSCP Reporter in a revised form. It also suggested the organization of a documentation centre for household surveys as a part of NHSCP.

188. The Commission appreciated the manner in which the Programme had been managed and funds secured, including \$6 million in the past two years, for the assistance of participating countries. It emphasized the need for the continuation of such assistance even after 1991 when NHSCP as a project was expected to terminate. It noted that the responsibility for continued technical co-operation in household survey activities would eventually be taken over by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development through the Statistical Office. It emphasized the need for the extension of further technical co-operation on surveys, including advice to countries in the maintenance phase of the programme and to those embarking on new survey programmes, as well as for assistance in mobilizing the requisite funding support.

189. The Commission stressed the need for co-operation and co-ordination in household survey activities at the national level as well as at the international level. Indeed, it observed that NHSCP had been a good model for inter-agency co-operation in statistical development. It recalled in that connection Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/5, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the agencies concerned, to co-ordinate technical co-operation activities in the field of household surveys within the context of NHSCP and also strongly urged the multilateral and bilateral donor agencies to provide resources to help developing countries implement their survey development plans within the framework of the Programme, as part of their technical co-operation activities, and ensure that the survey activities they might promote would be compatible with and contribute to the Programme.

190. The Commission noted in that context the arrangements already worked out for collaboration with the Pan-Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD) and the growing co-operation with specialized agencies, such as ILO, FAO, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and funding agencies, such as UNEPA and UNICEF, in the promotion of household survey activities of mutual interest. It also stressed the need for effective co-ordination between NHSCP and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) programmes, sponsored by the World Bank, and noted in that connection the continuing dialogue and exchange of ideas on the modalities of co-ordination between the Statistical Office and the Bank. It emphasized in that context that it was essentially for countries to determine the type of survey programme they needed to meet their own requirements and noted with interest the inclusion of LSMS surveys within the NHSCP programmes in some of the participating countries.

191. The Commission recognized with appreciation the supportive role played by the regional economic and social commissions in the promotion and implementation of

NHSCP and noted with concern the depleted strength of the regional teams largely attributable to budgetary constraints and reiterated the paramount need for strengthening the regional commissions through additional extrabudgetary support.

Action taken by the Commission

192. The Commission:

(a) Noted with appreciation the progress made in the implementation of NHSCP under the guidance of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and endorsed its work programme for 1989-1990;

(b) Supported the suggestions for the future presented by the Secretary-General and emphasized in that context the need for further donor support for country level as well as regional and global level activities on a continuing basis well beyond 1991;

(c) Recognized the supportive role played by the regional commissions and reiterated the need for strengthening the regional teams;

(d) Emphasized the need for effective co-ordination with other household survey programmes in operation, such as LSMS and SDA of the World Bank, and welcomed the collaborative arrangements already in place and under further consideration;

(e) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-sixth session, a further report on the progress of NHSCP and its co-ordination with other household survey programmes.

D. World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys

193. The Commission considered item 10 (d) of its agenda at its 430th meeting, on 10 February 1989. It had before it the report of the World Bank on World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys (E/CN.3/1989/19). It welcomed the report and expressed its gratitude to the World Bank for preparing it.

194. The Commission noted that the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) had been launched by the World Bank in 1980, essentially as a research project. The World Bank pointed out that the study had been launched in response to the need for reliable data at the household level to study the issues of poverty and living standards. The study had a threefold objective: collection of policy-relevant high-quality data, rapid processing of results and appropriate policy-oriented analysis of data. Such research had been successfully carried out in a small number of countries and had been found useful. On the other hand, an opinion was expressed that the data were of limited value, particularly in view of their highly aggregated form. The Commission also noted that LSMS had now moved into an operational phase and several countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean had either taken up or proposed to take up integrated multi-subject surveys of the LSMS type on a continuous basis. It welcomed, in that connection, both the co-operation that existed between NHSCP and LSMS, and the proposal to

undertake in some countries an LSMS type of survey within the framework of NHSCP. It further noted that the World Bank would continue to document in detail and disseminate widely both the positive and negative experiences of LSMS, including the uses made of the data, for the benefit of future users of LSMS methodology.

195. The Commission welcomed the main objectives of the World Bank's new Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project for sub-Saharan Africa, funded by UNDP and the African Development Bank, as well as by some bilateral donors. It was reported that some 30 countries in sub-Saharan Africa had indicated interest in participating in that project. The project had as one of its main statistical objectives the development and implementation of permanent integrated household surveys as an input into the measurement, assessment and analysis of the impact of macro-economic policies on population groups in the process of structural adjustment. The project envisaged data collection, analysis and policy research in an integrated fashion and was thus unique and innovative in that respect. The Commission observed that, because of its well-articulated potentialities for the collection of data for use in the design and implementation of structural adjustment programmes, the project had attracted considerable attention from potential donors and policy makers in several African countries.

196. The Commission welcomed the emphasis the SDA project placed on strengthening national statistical and analytical capabilities in Africa and noted with satisfaction that the project would function within a framework of international collaboration. The Commission also noted with appreciation the strong national orientation of the SDA project and the mechanisms envisaged for user consultations within the participating countries, and it welcomed the emphasis on flexibility in the design of the national programmes to meet national needs, including the strengthening and development of analytical capabilities. The Commission suggested that the social content of the project be strengthened.

197. The Commission noted the use of modern data-processing technology and development of appropriate software for the quick tabulation of survey data and production of survey results. A few members, however, stressed the desirability of using technology appropriate to the conditions and needs of each country.

198. The Commission noted that the conceptual framework of the SDA project, which included the proposed survey methodology, was to be discussed at a series of meetings with the funding agencies, representatives of national Governments - both users and statisticians - and international and regional organizations, including NHSCP, and that it would be finalized in the light of those discussions. An opinion was expressed that an integrated data set could be ideal for those purposes, although not necessarily for all household surveys; nor might it be practical for all countries. The hope was expressed that the usability of the information collected on the basis of small samples, as proposed for the purposes envisaged, would be given due consideration in finalizing the framework. The World Bank indicated that large enough samples would be used.

199. In view of the multi-subject coverage and permanent nature of the survey programme, the Commission urged the Bank to take full account of the existing projected statistical activities in general, and household survey programmes in particular, to avoid the possible disruption of ongoing work in the countries concerned. Some members expressed unqualified support for the programme, while others, in expressing qualified support, urged the World Bank to take account of other statistical programmes of national relevance that should not be disrupted or swamped.

200. The Commission reiterated the need and welcomed the desire for effective co-ordination between SDA and NHSCP in Africa and observed that the survey programmes envisaged in the two projects were mutually compatible and, indeed, could reinforce each other. The representative of the World Bank identified the elements of co-ordination it sought: inter alia, exchange of documentation and programme plans, joint NHSCP and SDA appraisal missions, consultations with specialized agencies and ECA, co-ordination of survey programmes at the country level, and sharing of experiences. He said that while it would not be possible to fully integrate or fuse the two programmes, their complementary nature would be emphasized for the benefit of participating Governments. The Commission, in that connection, nevertheless emphasized the pivotal role of the country concerned in determining the needs and the nature of the survey programme it would undertake.

201. The complementary roles of the two programmes were generally recognized, and in that context one member suggested that assistance rendered to them should depend on the following criteria:

- (a) That neither project would compete with the other or seek to disrupt the other, even incidentally;
- (b) That no effort would be made to impose any particular survey on any country;
- (c) That the two projects would aim at capability-building;
- (d) That the two projects would primarily produce data usable for the country as well as the international community;
- (e) That in the case of the SDA project, with its emphasis on producing inputs for policy-making, it should seek multi-round, multi-year funding.

Some of the developed countries and international organizations engaged in funding both the NHSCP and the SDA projects indicated that they were prepared to provide assistance for country level projects and emphasized the importance of co-ordination.

202. The Commission welcomed and noted with appreciation the desire for mutual co-operation expressed by both the World Bank and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the steps already taken for such co-operation. In particular, it noted with satisfaction that the Statistical Office was represented on the SDA project Steering Committee and the World Bank had all along been a member of the NHSCP Programme Review Committee, and that further proposals for co-ordination and collaboration had been exchanged between the two organizations. It also welcomed the involvement of ECA and other international agencies in the implementation of the SDA project, which was essential for its success.

Action taken by the Commission

203. The Commission:

- (a) Took note of the LSMS experience as presented and endorsed the World Bank's effort to continue to document in detail and disseminate widely the experiences of LSMS, including the uses made of the data;

(b) Endorsed the SDA project as an important and unique initiative in capability-building in Africa directed at data gathering and use in the formulation of national policies for structural adjustment;

(c) Welcomed the main objectives of the SDA project and the widespread attention it had attracted, particularly at the country level;

(d) Emphasized its understanding that in implementation of the SDA programme, account would be taken of ongoing national and regional statistical activities and that it would be carried out in collaboration with NHSCP and other programmes;

(e) Appreciated the ongoing efforts at achieving co-ordination between the SDA project and NHSCP and urged the need to avoid duplication and disruption of ongoing work in the countries;

(f) Noted that the conceptual framework of the SDA programme, which included the proposed survey methodology, would be finalized after a series of meetings with international, regional and country level officials, following which a revised document would be prepared;

(g) Invited the World Bank to prepare a further report on the progress of LSMS and SDA programmes, including fuller details of the survey methodology proposed for the SDA programme, for submission to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Chapter X

CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

204. The Commission considered item 11 of its agenda at its 432nd meeting, on 13 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its twelfth session (E/CN.3/1989/20).

205. The Commission noted that in its report the Working Group had set out its views on:

(a) Co-ordination of ad hoc requests to Member States for statistics from non-statistical units of the United Nations and other international organizations (paras. 50-51);

(b) Co-ordination of recurrent statistical data collection, processing and sharing among international organizations (paras. 52-55);

(c) Representation of regional intergovernmental statistical bodies in the Statistical Commission (paras. 56-58);

(d) Co-ordination of international statistical activities as a special topic (paras. 59-61).)

These views were considered by the Commission under agenda item 3 (a) (see chap. II, sect. A). The Commission also noted that the Working Group had expressed views on special topics to be taken up by the Statistical Commission at sessions following the twenty-fifth session (para. 62). These views were considered by the Commission under agenda item 13 (see chap. XII). The Commission further noted that the Working Group had reviewed progress and plans on the revision of the System of National Accounts and environment statistics (paras. 63-66).

206. The Commission considered the composition of the Working Group and the dates for its thirteenth session.

Action taken by the Commission

207. The Commission:

(a) Agreed that the composition of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination at its thirteenth session should be as follows:

(i) Officers of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session:

Chairman: Luis Alberto Beccaría (Argentina)

Vice-Chairmen: Hermann Haberman (United States of America)
M. A. Korolev (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Hiroyasu Kudo (Japan)

Rapporteur: Awad Mokhtar Hallouda (Egypt)

(ii) Representatives of States members of the Statistical Commission:

Emmanuel Oti Boateng (Ghana)

S. M. Ishaque (Pakistan)

(b) Agreed that the following representatives of States members of the Statistical Commission would act as alternates:

Carlos Jarque Uribe (Mexico), alternate to Luis Alberto Beccaria (Argentina)

Nouridine Bouraima (Togo), alternate to Emmanuel Oti Boateng (Ghana)

Zhang Sai (China), alternate to S. M. Ishaque (Pakistan);

(c) Recommended that the thirteenth session of the Working Group be held at Geneva from 11 to 14 September 1989.

Chapter XI

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

A. Programme performance and implementation

208. The Commission considered item 12 (a) of its agenda at its 431st meeting, on 13 February 1989. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General containing an overall review of the statistical work of international organizations for the period 1986 to June 1988 (E/CN.3/1989/21) and updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/22). Excerpts from the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its twenty-eighth session (A/43/16 (Part I), paras. 21 and 137) and the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1986-1987 (A/43/326 and Corr.1 and Add.1) were made available to the Commission.

Action taken by the Commission

209. The Commission:

(a) Expressed its general satisfaction with the progress made by the international organizations in implementing their work programmes;

(b) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session a progress report on the statistical work of international organizations.

B. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991

210. The Commission considered item 12 (b) of its agenda at its 432nd meeting, on 13 February 1989. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1990-1991 and preliminary proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1989/24) and a note by the Secretary-General containing the proposed work programme and related information (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.1).

211. The Commission expressed satisfaction with the proposed work programme and agreed that it was well balanced, especially in the light of declining resources brought about by the financial crisis currently faced by the United Nations. Several members of the Commission commended the Statistical Office for its accomplishments in spite of diminished resources, particularly in the areas of the revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA), and the updating and harmonization of standard international classifications and the Central Product Classification (CPC). The Commission noted the potentially adverse impact of the increasing vacancy rate, which was 139 work-months in the biennium 1984-1985, 226 in the biennium 1986-1987, and estimated to be 292 in the biennium 1988-1989.

212. The Commission noted with considerable concern the proposed deletion of the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics from the work programme. Previous issues of the Compendium had played a key role in the work of the United Nations

Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the Commission on Human Settlements in assisting countries in policy planning and management to meet the challenges posed by extremely rapid urbanization in the developing countries. The Commission felt that since the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 had just been adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 43/181), discontinuation of the Compendium in the biennium 1990-1991 was particularly untimely.

213. Several members expressed regret that the Statistical Office might not be able to undertake work in areas identified for additional emphasis during the present session of the Commission, such as the full range of work needed to develop and implement the revised SNA, follow-up work on ISIC and CPC, new rounds of censuses in population, housing and industry, further work on environment statistics, services statistics, statistics on women and disabled persons and so forth. Since it was doubtful that resources from the regular budget for all that important work would be forthcoming in the short or medium term, it was recommended that the Statistical Office endeavour to mobilize additional extrabudgetary resources or advance its work, particularly in the area of methodological development, by developing other approaches.

214. Several different options were suggested, all of which embodied the principles (a) that the leadership and co-ordinating role of the Statistical Office should be preserved and (b) that the mechanism used should be inclusive so as to ensure that all countries interested in a particular area of work would be able to participate. The Commission reconfirmed that whatever mechanisms were developed, the Commission itself, on global matters, and the regional intergovernmental statistical bodies would be needed to provide overall direction and guidance.

215. Among the suggestions was a proposal for the formation of technical working groups similar to the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, for which there was considerable support. Under such arrangements the Statistical Office, in co-operation with the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination, would be asked to identify specific areas where work was needed and to organize a working group of specialists from interested countries, the Statistical Office providing secretariat support. The output might be in the form of a paper, a "think piece", on a draft classification, for example, which would be fed into the normal consultation machinery of the regional commissions, expert group meetings and finally the Statistical Commission for modification or any further action as appropriate.

216. It was also suggested that the Statistical Office be asked to prepare an explicit contingency plan of lower priority outputs to be used if resources were to be further reduced or if it were necessary to divert the present limited resources to some of the high priority areas. The Commission recognized, however, that there were limits to redeployment and that the overall needs of the Office could not be met simply through redeployment.

217. One management strategy that was suggested to cope with diminishing resources was the substitution of further technology for the more routine aspects of the work, which would compensate for the loss of General Service posts and entry-level Professional posts. The view was expressed that a disproportionately high percentage of staff resources was being allocated to data compilation, compared with methodological areas.

218. Finally, the Commission recalled its discussion of agenda items 3 to 9 and supported the priorities set forth in the proposed programme of work, as follows:

Highest priority

- 1.1 Further development of the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) and linkage with the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

Lowest priority

- 5.2 Price statistics for internationally traded commodities.

Action taken by the Commission

219. The Commission:

(a) Approved the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1990-1991 as contained in the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.1), subject to the comments made and the priorities set by the Commission;

(b) Urged that all efforts be made to mobilize the necessary extrabudgetary resources or to develop other approaches along the lines of the Voorburg Group model to ensure continuation of methodological work, on the understanding that any such experiments would preserve the roles of the Statistical Commission and the Statistical Office;

(c) Specified the programme elements that had the highest and lowest priority within the work programme (see para. 218 above).

C. Medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

220. The Commission considered item 12 (c) of its agenda at its 433rd meeting, on 14 February 1989. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the plans of international organizations in the area of statistics (E/CN.3/1989/23);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1990-1991 and preliminary proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1989/24);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General on preliminary proposals for the medium-term plan in statistics for 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2).

221. The Commission supported in general the preliminary proposals for the medium-term plan in statistics for 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2). The Commission noted that the medium-term plan was subject to formal review every two years, so that it could be revised in the light of changing circumstances. The reviews of the biennial work programmes that were formulated within the framework of the medium-term plan also provided opportunities for adjustments to be made in the

light of the progress of the work. That flexibility was very important as it permitted the Commission and the Statistical Office to take account of new developments at the national and international levels.

222. The Commission also supported the new structure of the proposed medium-term plan for the statistics programme, noting that that structure was now established entirely along functional lines. The Commission had considerable difficulty in dealing with the topic of priorities. Although the Commission accepted the proposals for priorities set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/24), namely, that subprogrammes 1 (Developing concepts and methods for use by Member States), 4 (Co-ordinating international statistical programmes) and 5 (Support for technical co-operation in statistics and statistical data processing) should be assigned high priority, it questioned the relevance of establishing priorities for the proposed medium-term period 1992-1997 at the present time.

223. The Commission noted that the proposed plan would be amended to take into account various comments, clarifications and corrections made in its discussion of the present agenda item as well as to reflect the decisions of the Commission under other agenda items. The Commission took note of the clarifications provided concerning paragraphs 6, 7, 19, 34 and 38 of the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2). The Commission expressed satisfaction that the Statistical Office intended to circulate the note to other international organizations for comments.

224. The Commission noted that, in addition to statistical co-ordination, organizational co-ordination was one of its responsibilities. The Commission was therefore interested in the reported statement that other international organizations could take over some of the work on compilation currently undertaken by the Statistical Office and that the resources thus freed could be redeployed to undertake methodological work. However, since no detailed information on the statistical capacity of other international organizations to take over compilation work had been supplied to the Commission, the Commission could not consider the matter further. The Commission noted that in connection with agenda item 3 (c) (see chap. II, sect. C) it had endorsed the recurrent statistical publications programme of the Statistical Office as serving a vital and necessary function. It was pointed out that the prevailing practice was that the Statistical Office compiled and published data predominantly collected by national statistical offices, while data predominantly collected by ministries were compiled and published by the specialized agency concerned. Since that practice had been and was still highly successful, great care should be taken not to disrupt the existing modalities.

Action taken by the Commission

225. The Commission:

(a) Expressed general support for the proposed objectives and strategies and the proposed new subprogramme structure set out in the note by the Secretary-General containing preliminary proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2);

(b) Decided to leave unchanged the priorities assigned to the subprogrammes from that recommended by the Commission in previous sessions, as set out in document E/CN.3/1989/24;

(c) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to revise the proposals contained in document E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2 to take the Commission's views into account;

(d) Endorsed the general direction of the planned work of international organizations in the area of statistics as set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1989/23) and agreed that the report served a very important purpose.

Chapter XII

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

226. The Commission considered item 13 of its agenda at its 433rd and 435th meetings, on 14 and 15 February 1989. It had before it a note by the Secretariat containing the draft provisional agenda for its twenty-sixth session together with a list of requested documentation (E/CN.3/1989/L.3/Rev.1) and the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its twelfth session (E/CN.3/1989/20, para. 62).

227. The draft provisional agenda and proposed documentation were orally amended to reflect decisions made by the Commission at the current session. Other amendments and clarifications were made during the discussion.

228. The Statistical Commission decided that two special topics should be included in the agenda of the twenty-sixth session, taking into account the desire to discuss special issues in adequate depth, the time available for discussion and the resource situation in the Statistical Office for preparing the appropriate documentation. The Commission selected the following items from the list of special issues that was before it (E/CN.3/1989/L.3/Rev.1, para. 7):

- (i) Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services;
- (ii) Implications of structural adjustment and the debt crisis for national statistical services and international statistical work, and statistical needs related to the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade.

The latter issue was a combination of two of the items on the list. The Commission requested the Statistical Office to prepare, for review by the Working Group, outlines of documents for the two special issues selected, and noted with appreciation that the World Bank would be able to offer input in respect of the documentation for the second special issue. The Commission felt that discussion of both issues was very timely. The first special issue would build upon the discussions about dissemination and user needs that had taken place at recent Commission meetings and would help clarify views on desirable future directions of effort. The second was considered important, in part because the debt problem had implications for developed economies as well as for developing ones, and the impact of structural adjustment was already being felt in national statistical services; the analysis should include consideration of the need for statistical data during the adjustment process and the fourth United Nations development decade, and how the need would be met.

229. The Commission emphasized that all the documents should be available in all languages well in advance of the twenty-sixth session. That was considered especially important for the documentation under items 4 (National accounts and balances), 12 (Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes) and 13 (Programme questions), in order to allow representatives adequate time for preparation.

230. Subject to final review by the Working Group, the Commission approved the provisional agenda for its twenty-sixth session, as orally amended, together with the requested documentation.

231. At its 435th meeting, on 15 February, the Commission decided to recommend the Economic and Social Council to approve the provisional agenda and documentation for its twenty-sixth session (see chap. I, sect. B, draft decision).

Chapter XIII

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

232. At its 434th and 435th meetings, on 15 February 1989, the Commission adopted the report on its twenty-fifth session (E/CN.3/1989/L.4 and Add.1-20), as amended during the discussion.

Chapter XIV

ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

233. The Statistical Commission held its twenty-fifth session at United Nations Headquarters from 6 to 15 February 1989. The Commission held 15 meetings (421st to 435th meetings).

234. The session was opened by Emmanuel Oti Boateng (Ghana), Chairman of the Commission at its twenty-fourth session.

235. The Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs and the Under-Secretary-General for Technical Co-operation for Development made statements.

B. Attendance

236. The session was attended by 23 States members of the Commission. Observers for other States Members of the United Nations and representatives of the Secretariat, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, and intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations also attended. A list of participants is given in annex I to the present report.

C. Election of officers

237. At its 421st meeting, on 6 February 1989, the Commission elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Luis Alberto Beccaría (Argentina)

Vice-Chairmen: Hermann Habermann (United States of America)
M. A. Korolev (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Hiroyasu Kudo (Japan)

Rapporteur: Awad Mokhtar Hallouda (Egypt)

D. Agenda

238. At its 421st meeting, on 6 February 1989, the Commission adopted the provisional agenda contained in document E/CN.3/1989/1, as orally amended (see annex II to the present report).

239. The Commission also approved the organization of the work of the session contained in the note by the Secretariat (E/CN.3/1989/L.1), as orally amended.

Annex I

ATTENDANCE

Members

Argentina: Luis Alberto Beccaria, Lelia Boeri de Cervetto,* Enrique de la Torre*

Brazil: Charles Curt Mueller, Lenildo Fernandes Silva,* Paulo de Goes Filho,* Marco Farani*

Bulgaria: Stanoi Tassev, Etien Ninov,* Jordan Totev,* Raiko Raichev*

Canada: Ivan P. Fellegi, Gordon J. Brackstone,* Jacob Ryten,* Béla Prigly*

China: Zhang Sai, Feng Nailin*

Czechoslovakia: Vladimír Mička, Zdenek Veselý,* Pavol Šepelák*

Egypt: Awad Mokhtar Hallouda

France: Jean-Claude Milleron, Gaston Banderier*

Germany, Federal Republic of: Gerhard Bürgin, Hans-Joachim Vergau,* Arthur Borkmann,* Benno Bunse*

Ghana: Emmanuel Oti Boateng, E. Obeng Kufuor*

Hungary: Vera Nyitrai György Lutzer,* Zoltán Szedlacsko*

Iran (Islamic Republic of): Majid Jamshidi

Japan: Hiroyasu Kudo, Takao Ohashi,* Mitsuru Ide,* Kaoru Yoshikawa,* Masayaki Takashima,* Eiichi Nishizawa,* Michiko Hanagasaki,* Shunichi Yoshikawa*

Mexico: Carlos Jarque Uribe, Miguel Cervera,* Mario Palma Rojo,* Clarisa Torres,* Jorge Duhalt Villar*

Morocco: Fariss Tadili, Abderrahim Ben-Moussa*

Norway: Gisle Skäncke, Mikael Selsjord*

Pakistan: S. M. Ishaque

Panama: Amílcar Villarreal**

Spain: Javier Ruiz-Castillo Ucelay, Carmen Arribas*

* Alternate.

** Did not attend.

Togo: Nouridine Bouraima

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: M. A. Korolev, V. S. Shevchenko,*
V. D. Zelenov,* V. V. Rumiantsev,*
A. L. Panshin,* S. A. Sukharev*

United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland: Jack Hibbert, J. Erritt,* T. Griffin,* R. Allen*

United States of America: Hermann Habermann, Suzann K. Evinger,*
Robert O. Bartram,* John E. Bregger,* Carol Carson,*
Kevin Charles,* Kenneth V. Dalton,* Mr. Paul O. Flaim,*
C. Louis Kincannon,* John T. McCracken,*
Janet L. Norwood,* Katrina W. Reut,* Charles A. Waite,*
C. Harvey Monk,* Phillip Ross*

Zambia: C. L. C. Ssewankambo, P. Hamakona,* E. M. C. Kazembe*

States Members of the United Nations represented by observers

Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cuba, Italy, Jordan, Netherlands,
New Zealand, Peru, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

United Nations Secretariat

United Nations Office at Vienna, Department of International Economic and
Social Affairs, Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, United
Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Economic Commission for Africa,
Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the
Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and
Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
(Habitat)

United Nations bodies

United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United
Nations Population Fund, International Research and Training Institute for the
Advancement of Women, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Specialized agencies and GATT

International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,
World Health Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations
Industrial Development Organization, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Intergovernmental organizations

African Development Bank, Customs Co-operation Council, European Economic Community, Organisation for Economic Co-operation for Development, World Tourism Organization

Non-governmental organizations

Category I: International Chamber of Commerce

Category II: International Statistical Institute

Roster: Helen Keller International Incorporated

Annex II

AGENDA OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Special issues and related matters:
 - (a) Co-ordination of international statistical activities;
 - (b) Recruitment and selection of professional staff for work in national statistical offices and statistical services of the United Nations;
 - (c) Recurrent statistical publications of the United Nations.
4. National accounts and balances:
 - (a) System of National Accounts (SNA);
 - (b) System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS);
 - (c) Links between the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy.
5. Service statistics.
6. International economic classifications:
 - (a) International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification (CPC);
 - (b) International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE).
7. Price statistics.
8. Demographic, social and environment statistics:
 - (a) Population and housing censuses;
 - (b) Social statistics and indicators;
 - (c) Environment statistics;
 - (d) Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development.
9. General development and integration of methodological work.
10. Technical co-operation:
 - (a) Technical co-operation in statistics;

- (b) Current state of statistics and statistical development in developing countries;
 - (c) National Household Survey Capability Programme;
 - (d) World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys.
11. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes.
 12. Programme questions:
 - (a) Programme performance and implementation;
 - (b) Proposed programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991;
 - (c) Medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997.
 13. Provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Commission.
 14. Report of the Commission on its twenty-fifth session.

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

<u>Document number</u>	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
A/43/329	12 (c)	Preparation of the next medium-term plan: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/1989/1	2	Provisional agenda
E/CN.3/1989/2	3 (b)	Recruitment and selection of professional staff for work in national statistical offices and statistical services of the United Nations: report of the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/1989/3	3 (c)	Recurrent statistical publications of the United Nations: report of the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/1989/4	4 (a)	Progress in the revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA): report of the Secretary-General
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