

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION

Report of the Bureau Meeting

New York, 12 February 1998

1. The Bureau met on 12 February 1998, immediately after the nineteenth session of the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, to take further follow-up action on the tasks assigned to it by the Subcommittee during its thirty-first session (16-18 September 1997), further to the Bureau's consideration of the matters at its meeting on 18 September 1997. The Bureau took the following actions:

(a) Coordination issues arising from implementation of the International Monetary Fund Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS)

2. As requested by the Bureau at its meeting on 18 September 1997, ESCAP reported on relevant discussions at the Working Group of Statistical Experts of ESCAP which was held from 11 to 14 November 1997. The Bureau noted the view of the ESCAP Working Group that "SDDS and GDDS would have a significant impact on national statistical services. It also emphasized the need for coordination among international agencies in the adoption of statistical and data dissemination standards and the avoidance of duplicative requests to countries, which would increase the already heavy compliance burden on national statistical offices. Interagency coordination was also necessary in the provision of technical assistance to countries seeking to participate in the GDDS". The Bureau decided to ask members of the Subcommittee if they have observed any increase in technical assistance requests resulting from efforts to implement the GDDS (and SDDS), and to ask the IMF whether it envisaged an increase, and if so how it planned to deal with it.

(b) Environment statistics

3. UNSD presented its proposal to the Bureau on how UNSD intended to prepare this agenda item for the Subcommittee. The Bureau agreed to the approach as follows: (a) UNSD to prepare a position paper on the issues, and circulate it to all organizations involved, with a request that they each react to the UNSD and copy their reaction to all the organizations, (b) UNSD to prepare a brief presentation to the Subcommittee

summarizing the outcome, and (c) discussion at the Subcommittee to crystallize the issues.

(c) The classification of statistics and indicators

4. ESCAP, ILO and ISI submitted revised proposals dated 30 January 1998 for the classification, taking into account comments that members had provided. The Bureau noted the similarities and differences between the proposed classification and that in use for the CES/OECD/EUROSTAT integrated presentation of work plans, and considered it important that there should be just one classification. The Chairman agreed to contact ECE and discuss ways to bring them into agreement, noting that some changes in both classifications would be needed to reach this objective. On a specific classification issue, the Bureau agreed that environmental accounting should be placed under "National resources and environment statistics" rather than under "National accounts".

(d) Using the "inventory of statistical data collection activities" to meet the objectives that were intended to be met by the "inventory of all indicators produced in the United Nations system"

5. The Bureau noted a study that had been carried out by UNSD at the request of the Subcommittee. The study concluded that "the inventory of statistical data collection activities" cannot meet the needs that were intended to be met by the "inventory of all indicators produced in the United Nations system". The Bureau also noted the request of CCPOQ at its eleventh session (22-26 September 1997)(ACC/1997/15, para. 9), that "the Subcommittee should continue to give consideration to the request of the Task Force on An Enabling Environment that the UNSD develop an inventory of indicators produced by the United Nations system". The Bureau decided that the Subcommittee should reconsider the possible development of the "inventory of all indicators produced in the United Nations system" at its session in June 1998.

(e) Reporting on international statistical work programmes to the Statistical Commission

6. During the nineteenth session of the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, 10-12 February 1998, the members of the Bureau had seen a demonstration via Internet of the pilot integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organization in statistical methodology based on planned outputs of the UNSD, IMF, ILO and the World Bank. The Bureau noted that a primary problem was to get other organizations to input their materials, and decided to return to the issue at the meeting of

the Subcommittee in June 1998.

(f) Occasional part-day sessions on a special topic with an invited guest

7. The Bureau supported a proposal to hold a part-day session at the June 1998 meeting of the Subcommittee on "The electronic store", with a presentation by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) on its experience in selling its outputs in electronic form, including via Internet. The Bureau asked Mr. J-M Leger to follow this up with ITU.

(g) Responding to requests from the Statistical Commission

8. The Bureau noted that, in response to requests by the Statistical Commission, the Director of the UNSD can make commitments for that organization but not for others, and urged individual organizations to speak their views on these requests at the time they are made by the Statistical Commission.

(h) The Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) and the core set of indicators associated with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

9. The Bureau noted that UNSD was now involved in the UNDAF process. The Bureau decided that under this item, during the June 1998 session of the Subcommittee, the Subcommittee should address the issue of active association by members of the Subcommittee with the MNSDS.

(i) Location and timing of Subcommittee meetings

10. The Bureau noted the long-standing rule for meetings of subsidiary bodies of the ACC machinery, namely that they should meet in New York or Geneva. The Bureau also noted that subsidiary bodies do in fact meet at locations other than New York and Geneva. The Bureau agreed not to make other rules but to make a decision each year about the location. The Bureau asked ESCAP to poll the regional commissions on their preferences, taking account of the fact that they travel the furthest and face the highest costs. The Bureau also agreed that it was not feasible to set a fixed month of the year for meetings of the Subcommittee.