

ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES
Twenty-ninth session
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Item 1 of the provisional agenda

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ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

MEETING OF THE BUREAU

8 September, 1994

New York

Summary of Discussion

1. The Bureau met on Thursday, 8 September, 1994. The meeting was attended by J. McLenaghan (IMF), S. Quin (IMF), P. Sainz (ECLAC), H. Habermann (UNSTAT). At the request of the Bureau, Mr. Griffin (ECE) attended for the discussion on the integrated presentation of work plans in statistics. The annotated agenda of the Bureau meeting, which provides background information for each item, is attached as Annex I, and background documents are included in Annex II. The Bureau's consideration of each item of the agenda follows:

a. Ways to encourage countries to report data and to report according to international recommendations (paragraph 21(a) of the report of the Subcommittee).

2. The Bureau reviewed recent experience, including the role of regional commissions, in trying to ensure the reporting of external trade statistics according to international standards and the scope for addressing other areas of statistics in a similar fashion. It was noted that some developed countries remain reluctant to make the extra effort to report trade statistics as required (where these differed from national presentations), even when the necessary data are available. The Bureau agreed that ways should be found of emphasizing users' needs for internationally comparable data and to refer the issue to the Statistical Commission. There was support for the initiative taken by ECLAC to use a regional workshop for developing the use of international classifications in the region and to also identify weaknesses in reported trade statistics (including military trade) of member countries and steps that could be taken to address them. It was noted that a similar approach would be useful in the areas of prices and industrial statistics. In due course, the experience of ECLAC in this area should be brought to the attention of the other regional commissions and to the task forces concerned.

b. Integrated presentation of work plans in statistics (the ECE/EUROSTAT. OECD experience) (paragraph 29 of the report of the Subcommittee).

3. The Bureau reviewed the possible benefits from promoting the integrated presentation of workplans on both a regional and global bases, based on the experience to date of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). Mr. Griffin noted that it was still too early to draw firm conclusions as statistical programs are likely to change only over time, but he was sure that the experience would prove useful in identifying gaps and overlaps and lead, where appropriate, to the reevaluation of country programs and a clearer focus on objectives. The integrated approach had also proved useful in focusing attention on the work of the task forces and in defining and coordinating the work of international organizations (including the relationship between their statistical work and their other activities).

4. In the case of ECLAC at least, it was noted that the scope of work programs in the region does not warrant the same degree of coordination except in certain areas of statistics where the scale of activity and degree of country interest indicate possible benefits with regard to information sharing and, for example, from a more coordinated approach towards training. The role of international organizations and developed countries in incorporating these activities in their work is considered highly desirable. The areas identified by ECLAC were environment, national accounts, poverty statistics and issues related to the dissemination of statistics. ECLAC will report to the next meeting of the Subcommittee and to the other regional commissions on experiences in these areas.

5. The Bureau reviewed the complexity of the task and the possible benefits of adopting an integrated presentation of work plans in a global setting. In light of this review, the Bureau decided to wait to see more clearly what benefits emerged from the experience of the regional commissions. Accordingly, a report should be made to the Subcommittee at a later stage on changes in work programs that may be attributed to the adoption of the integrated approach. In the meantime, the task force approach should continue to be the main vehicle for addressing coordination issues on a global level, particularly as these are already focused on subjects identified as needing coordination.

6. In conclusion, it was agreed that ECLAC would prepare a note for the next meeting of the Subcommittee on its experiences with adopting an integrated approach to the presentation of work plans. ECE would prepare a note on issues raised by applying the integrated approach to a global setting.

c. Free exchange of statistics-related materials among organizations active in the Subcommittee (paragraph 37 of the report of the Subcommittee).

7. No further developments were reported in this area, which is referred back to the Subcommittee. However, EUROSTAT has raised the issue in relation to the IMF's statistical publications.

- d. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections (SCDEP) on its eighteenth session, 28-30 June, 1994 (paragraph 32 of the report of the Subcommittee).
8. No further developments were reported in this area.
- e. Election of the Chairman of the Subcommittee and a new member of the Bureau in 1995 (paragraph 6 of the report of the Subcommittee).
9. The Bureau noted that, in accordance with the decision of the Subcommittee, the membership of the Bureau should include, among the four members, at least one representative of a Regional Commission and one of a specialized organization. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Subcommittee was elected on a personal basis in that capacity and did not represent his or her own agency.
- f. Agenda for the twenty-ninth session of the Subcommittee (paragraph 38 of the report of the Subcommittee).
10. The provisional agenda agreed upon at the last session of the Subcommittee was reviewed and finalized.
11. Regarding item (a), issues related to the work of the task forces, it was agreed that a particular focus should be given to the coordination of the work of the task forces at the regional level (particularly in the areas — of national accounts and trade statistics), for which appropriate documentation may be required. This would provide a clearer linkage with issues raised in item (b), coordination issues at the regional level.
12. Regarding item (e), needs for the statistics of the analytical and policy units of international organizations and the statistics produced by those organizations, see below.
13. Regarding item (g), coordination of ongoing statistical programs, no issues have yet been submitted for discussion under this item.
14. Regarding item (i), monitoring the implementation of recommended classifications and standards in countries, it was noted that this item will be discussed at the expert working group to be held in November 1994 and which will be hosted by UNSTAT.
15. Regarding item (j), issues concerning the integration of the work of ad hoc groups (Voorburg Group on services statistics, Siena group on social statistics and London Group on environment statistics), it was agreed that the relevant task forces be instructed to develop an appropriate relationship with these groups and report back to the Subcommittee.
16. It was recalled that the IMF, OECD and the World Bank are to prepare the notes referred to in paragraph 3 of the report of the Subcommittee.

h. Other decisions made at the twenty-seventh session of the Subcommittee (paragraphs 5, 19, 20, 21(c), 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31 and 35 of the report of the Subcommittee).

17. Regarding paragraph 5, it was agreed that the Subcommittee would approach the OECD regarding their data sources for bilateral aid and whether these sources can separately identify bilateral aid in statistics. As a second step, the Subcommittee should approach donor countries represented on the Working Group. It was noted that the need to monitor the involvement of bilateral agencies as a step towards promoting their greater involvement should be drawn to the attention of the Statistical Commission.

18. Regarding paragraph 19, it was understood that UNSTAT is presently seeking the services of an expert from a central statistical office to undertake the work on services statistics.

19. Regarding paragraph 30, it is expected that UNFPA and UNSTAT will work together to prepare a report for the Statistical Commission. UNSTAT has approached UNDP for a response to this request.

20. Regarding the timing and location of the next meeting of the Subcommittee, it was agreed that the most appropriate time and location would be June, 1995 in Geneva, following the CES meeting. Among other things, this would allow a reasonable interval before the task forces report to the Working Group (in September, 1995).