

STATUS AND PLANS OF CO-ORDINATION TOOLS

Note prepared by the Statistical Division
of the United Nations Secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

1. ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities at its twenty-eighth session in June 1994 agreed to the proposals made by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat concerning the content and timetable for the production of the co-ordination tools.¹/ The following co-ordination tools were listed:

- ✓ 1. The Directory of International Statistics;
- ✓ 2. Annotated list of methodological publications;
- 3. Documents containing information on programmes and plans of international statistical organizations;
- ✓ 4. Inventory of statistical data collection activities;
- ✓ 5. Inventory of computerised statistical databases;
- ✓ 6. List of classifications used in statistics.

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2. Brief description of the co-ordination tools is available in the Note Directories, inventories and other tools and reporting mechanisms, prepared as co-operative efforts by the international organizations, for promoting co-ordination, prepared by the Statistical Division in March 1994 as information for national statistical authorities. The Note is available as a background document. RR has a copy.

3. The present Note includes the status and plans for these outputs and an assessment of the feasibility of producing them.

I. Directory of International Statistics.

4. The latest version of the Directory of International Statistics (Volume I) was issued in 1982 and contains listing of the statistical series compiled by the organizations of the United Nations system and some non-United Nations organizations active in international statistics. This includes references to the organizations which collect the data from countries, the publications in which the data can be found, the frequency of the series and an indication of whether the series is maintained in machine-readable form. The series are listed by subject-matter. Volume II of the Directory, which is also known as the Interim Description of the

Vol I It also includes [descr. of recurrent pubs
machine-readable data banks.

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Global Statistical System and was prepared ^{for} by the Review Group in June 1992, is available in the draft form and contains descriptions of the organization, responsibilities and functioning of the statistical services of the United Nations system and other organizations active in international statistics. It includes information on co-ordination arrangements and a brief guide to technical cooperation in statistics. The Directory is structured as follows:

Vol II of

- I. Introduction
- II. Statistical responsibilities and organization: the United Nations:
 - A. Statistical Commission
 - B. Statistical Division of the United Nations
 - C. Regional Commissions:
 1. Economic Commission for Europe
 2. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
 3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
 4. Economic Commission for Africa
 5. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
 - D. Other United Nations bodies:
 1. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
 2. United Nations Environment Programme
 3. International Narcotics Control Board
 4. United Nations Children's Fund
 5. United Nations Development Programme
 6. United Nations Population Fund
- III. Statistical responsibilities and organization: the specialized agencies and the World Trade Organization:
 - A. International Labour Organisation
 - B. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
 - C. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 - D. International Civil Aviation Organization
 - E. World Health Organization
 - F. World Bank
 - G. International Monetary Fund
 - H. Universal Postal Union
 - I. International Telecommunication Union
 - J. World Intellectual Property Organization
 - K. International Fund for Agricultural Development
 - L. United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 - M. World Trade Organization
- IV. Co-ordination within the United Nations system:
 - A. General co-ordination arrangements
 - B. Co-ordination of statistical activities:

1. Role of the Statistical Commission
2. Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination
3. Informal contacts
4. ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities

V. Technical co-operation in statistics:

- A. General objectives and types of technical co-operation in statistics
- B. United Nations technical co-operation activities
- C. Procedures for obtaining technical co-operation through the United Nations system:
 1. United Nations Development Programme
 2. United Nations Population Fund

VI. Statistical activities of international organizations outside the United Nations system:

- A. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- B. Statistical Office of the European Communities
- C. Inter-American Statistical Institute
- D. World Tourism Organization
- E. European Free Trade Association
- F. International Cotton Advisory Committee
- G. International Lead and Zinc Study Group
- H. International Sugar Organization
- I. International Tea Committee
- J. International Tin Council
- K. International Wheat Council
- L. South Pacific Commission

5. The draft of the Volume II of the Directory has been sent to all organizations concerned for their update and review. The product is expected to be issued at the end of 1995 - beginning 1996.

II. Inventory of Statistical Data Collection Activities.

6. At its Special session, in April 1994, the Statistical Commission requested the Statistical Division to update and improve, on regular basis, the Inventory of Statistical Data Collection Activities, which was considered to be a permanent co-ordination tool. It was also requested that the Statistical Division in cooperation with the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, prepare an updated version of the Inventory, to be submitted to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination at its 1995 session, after review by the ACC Subcommittee. 2/

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7. The revised 1995 Inventory of statistical data-collection activities was compiled by the Statistical Division from information provided by the international agencies. The following international agencies responded: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); International Labour Organisation (ILO); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), World Health Organisation (WHO), International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Telecommunications Union (ITU), World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), World Trade Organization (WTO); Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and World Tourism Organization (WTO). No response to the inquiry was received from the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the World Bank at the time the present Note was written.

8. At its twenty-seventh session the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities suggested a number of ways to further improve the present Inventory in order to expand awareness of it at the national level and its use at both the international and national levels (E/C.3/1994/4, para 15). The following suggestions were introduced in the 1995 Inventory: (i) identification code; (ii) title of the international organizations and regional agencies; (iii) title of the data-collection activities; (iv) description of the data collection activities; (v) publications where the data collection activities used for; (vi) mode of the data-collection; (vii) statistical agency or other government department to which the inquiries are sent; (viii) deadline for return and month of dispatch of the inquiries; (ix) countries (regions) to which inquiries are sent; (x) indication of other governmental bodies (e.g. central banks, ministries of agriculture, health, labour, education, etc.) to which the inquiries are sent. The Inventory is designed as a set of cross-referenced databases comprising a master-inventory, several sub-inventories and reference files. Sub-inventories can be extracted (sorted out) from the master-inventory covering specific features and directions of the data-collection. The master-inventory contains more than 4000 entries. The Inventory is designed as a set of cross-referenced databases, comprising master-inventory and sub-inventories covering specific features and directions of the data collection.

9. The data-collection activities of the international organizations and agencies are under constant changes since urgent and legitimate new requests for data arise from time to time. This

requires a permanent maintenance of the Inventory in order to better serve international community and national statistical offices. The permanent maintenance of the Inventory can be only achieved if the Statistical Division will be supplied with information about changes at least once a year. The Inventory is available both as machine-readable product and as publication. The hard copy of the 1995 Inventory is available as background document.

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III. Annotated list of methodological publications.

10. Development of an annotated list of the full range of methodological publications issued by international organizations active in statistics is under consideration by the Statistical division subject to availability of the relevant information from the international organizations and agencies. *This also was updated in 1982 and was intended to be part of the Vol II of the Directory, but now is considered as a separate publication*

IV. List of classifications used in statistics.

11. An updated list of classifications used in statistics was developed by the Statistical Division in a form of database. It is organized along subject-matter line using ACC Sub-Committee Programme Classification for Statistical Activities. Each entry of the listing includes title of the classification, responsible agency, current status of the classification, availability in machine-readable form, unit classified, identification of non-statistical uses of the classification, purpose of classification, relationship with other statistical classifications and its availability in different languages. The list of classifications is available both as machine-readable product and as publication. The hard copy of the list is available as background document.

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V. Inventory of computerized statistical databases.

12. The Inventory of computerized statistical databases has been issued for many years as internal documents of the Technical Working Group on Statistical Databases of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. The inventory has been organized in terms of agency and it has a subject-matter index. The Statistical Division has developed an electronic version of the Inventory - StatBase Locator which provides the means to find international computerized statistical databases that offer public access to statistical information in machine-readable form. The statistical databases covered in this guide are maintained by the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations specialized agencies and related organizations and other international

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organizations. The topics covered by these databases are many and varied. Extensive statistical time series are available in many cases. Some of the databases are readily available to access directly via time-sharing facilities, while others provide access to the statistical information via diskette or magnetic tape.

13. StatBase Locator provides detailed information on each of the statistical database covered. This includes the database name and acronym, the name, address and a brief profile of the agency and office that maintains the database, a brief description of the database and information on access. Also included, to the extent information is available from the issuing agency, is a description of series, subject areas, access keys, classification systems used, the time span of data, number of records, the update frequency and annual increase in size of the database. Additional information includes documentation available, print publications and other outputs prepared from the database, the database management software used and the storage medium. StatBase Locator is available on a single diskette.

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NOTES

1/ Report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities (E/CN.3/1995/11, paras 30-32).

2/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement 9 (E/1994/29, paras 39-41).

