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20 July 1967

Administrative Committee on Coordination

Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities

Report of First Session

Rome

10 - 13 July 1967

ACC SUB-COMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

1. The first session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, which was created by the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its 43rd Session, took place in Rome from 10 to 13 July 1967. The following participated in the session:

UN	P.J. Loftus M.D. Palekar J.R. Messy (ECE) G. Parniczky (UNCTAD)
ILO	H.P. Lacroix
FAO	P.V. Sukhatme R.D. Narain S.S. Zarkovich S.H. Khamis N. Erus L.P.D. Gertenbach (Fisheries Dept.) M. de Backer (Forestry Division) A. Amati (Data Processing Section)
UNESCO	K.G. Brolin
IBRD	A.E. Tiemann
IMF	E. Hicks
WHO	W.P.D. Logan
GATT	L. Till

2. In view of the importance of the statistical activities carried out in its region by the Inter American Statistical Institute, that organization was invited to participate in the meeting and provide information on its statistical program. Miss Ana Casís represented the Secretary-General of IASI.

3. Dr. P.J. Loftus was elected as Chairman and Dr. R.D. Narain was appointed as Rapporteur.

4. The Committee adopted the Agenda as set out in Appendix "A".

Integrated five-year program of international statistics

5. A report entitled "Integrated five-year program of International Statistics" was submitted to the Fourteenth Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Commission felt that this report had facilitated its examination of problems of coordination, and further expressed the view that similar reports should be presented to future sessions. The Sub-Committee agreed that each agency would prepare a revised version of its own statistical program and send it to the United Nations

Statistical Office not later than 30 September 1967. It would facilitate integration of the various statements into a single report if the agencies followed the classifications and format agreed upon for the purpose of the previous report.

6. The Sub-Committee recognized that the programs of the various agencies were determined by the needs and decisions of the individual organizations and thus were conceptually not part of a single international program. Moreover, none of the organizations, in fact, possessed a definitive program for more than two years ahead and the projects listed must, therefore, be regarded as tentative and subject to change according to the circumstances in each agency. For this reason it was decided that the title of the next report should be "Integrated Statement of International Statistical Programmes", so as better to reflect its actual content.

7. Nonetheless, the Sub-Committee felt that the presentation of this integrated statement would help in identification of gaps and overlaps, and in informing each agency of the plans and intentions of others, it would thus provide a useful guideline for formulating future statistical programs in a way that would facilitate the task of the users of international statistics.

8. The preparation of this integrated statement also implies that the statistical units of each international agency should have full access to the statistical work and future plans of other divisions in the same organization, since only in this way can the former serve as an effective focal point for international coordination.

#### Coordination of World Standards

9. The Economic and Social Council, at its Forty-second Session, having taken note of the part of report of the Statistical Commission at its Fourteenth Session (E/4283 and Add 1), bearing on the coordination of world standards in inter-related fields of Statistics, requested the Secretary-General in resolution 1214 (XLII), in consultation with the specialized agencies:

"To prepare a report for consideration by the proposed inter-agency coordinating committee on statistical activities, and thereafter by the Statistical Commission at its fifteenth session, on the important inter-related fields of statistics for which world standards are desirable and on the practical methods by which the Statistical Commission could review and make recommendations on proposed statistical standards in these inter-related fields prior to their recognition as world standards".

10. The Sub-Committee made a list (Appendix "B") of fields which were clearly inter-related and among which world standards or changes in existing standards might in future be proposed. The Sub-Committee felt that the concurrence of the Statistical Commission in the establishment of standards would facilitate their promotion on a world-wide basis. There were many problems involved in establishing practical methods to permit the Commission's review of standards proposed by the specialized agencies. While procedures differed from one agency to another, generally a technical study was undertaken prior to the drafting of proposed standards and the technical problems were usually reviewed by a committee of experts

on the subject. Final draft standards were prepared by the agency on the basis of the experts' recommendations and were then submitted for the approval of the technical statistical body of the responsible agency. After completion of this work, the recommended international standard was submitted to the governing body of the responsible agency. Owing to the fact that the Statistical Commission meets only biennially, it would often be impossible to secure recommendations of the Statistical Commission at that stage on the proposed standard in time for their submission to the governing body of the responsible agency. The Sub-Committee felt, therefore, that it was in the course of the technical work that the advice and recommendations of the Statistical Commission could best be sought by keeping it fully informed of all technical developments. Where a standard had, however, been approved by a governing body, the Sub-Committee felt that the recommended standard should be transmitted to the Statistical Commission for review as to its applicability in the related fields of statistics.

#### The growing burden on national statistical offices

11. The Sub-Committee discussed the question of the burden on national statistical offices arising from the work of international organizations. It was noted that considerable progress had been made in the coordination of requests for statistical data to countries by the UN agencies. The principle has long been established that data supplied to one organization was available to all the UN organizations. Problems arising from requests made by international organizations, which were not party to the coordination arrangements established among the UN agencies, needed to be examined. The Sub-Committee intends to invite these organizations to participate in its coordination work on appropriate subjects, particularly international trade and industrial statistics. In the fields of agriculture, forestry and fishery, effective coordination with those organizations had been established at the working level.

#### Training of statistical personnel

12. The Sub-Committee discussed the training of statistical personnel in the developing countries. Training needs were of two kinds, namely (i) the training of middle level personnel, such as census supervisors and clerical personnel, and (ii) the training of professional statisticians. The Sub-Committee was of the view that the former was largely the responsibility of the national governments themselves. It recognized, however, that in the present state of development of statistical training some assistance to countries would be necessary for some time to come. It was felt that inter-national assistance could effectively be concentrated on the training of professional statistical personnel to meet the growing needs of the developing countries.

13. The Sub-Committee felt that the training of professional statisticians was an urgent need in the developing countries, particularly in Africa, Asia and the Far East, and the Middle East. While recognizing that UNESCO has a particular interest in statistical education arising from its general responsibility for education at the university level, the Sub-Committee emphasized that the efforts of the UN and the specialized agencies to meet this need should be part of an integrated program so as to achieve the best possible results. The assistance of the UNDP was required to establish integrated training facilities for

statisticians in the main fields of statistics for which the UN and the specialized agencies are responsible. It was agreed that members of the Sub-Committee would be kept informed concerning intended projects for the establishment of statistical training institutes. The purpose of consultations between members of the Sub-Committee would be to examine the relative merits of the projects contemplated and to present selected joint projects to UNDP and other authorities. Proposals for regional institutes, one in Asia and the Far East and another in East Africa, were already under consideration by the UNDP. Information on the details of these projects would be made available to members of the Sub-Committee by the statistical office of the UN so that the needs in the fields of interest to each Agency could be taken fully into account. The Sub-Committee gave its strong support to the establishment of these two projects.

14. The Sub-Committee expressed its desire to have from the UNDP a statement of its policy in the matter of assistance in the establishment of training facilities in the field of statistics.

#### Technical assistance activities

15. The Sub-Committee had a discussion on technical assistance activities in the countries and decided to review the Technical Assistance program in the field of statistics at a subsequent session, including the question of coordinating the program of fellowships with that of training institutes and seminars.

#### Consistency of published statistics

16. Data on population has assumed particular importance in recent years and is required by the agencies in their studies, such as those on economic projections, future food supplies, etc. The Statistical Office of the UN, which has the primary responsibility in the field of population statistics, would provide means by which the agencies would be kept informed of the most recent data on population so that they may be able to use these as a single basic series in their work and publications.

#### Developments in computer methodology and their implications

17. In discussing the experiences of the agencies in computer processing of the statistical data, the Sub-Committee recognized that this was an important field for close cooperation between the agencies at the technical level. Amongst other things, the agencies should investigate the possibility of sharing systems analysts and programs.

#### Other matters

18. The Sub-Committee briefly discussed the question of country nomenclature and some aspects of the work carried out by the agencies relating to population censuses, vital statistics, social security statistics and costs of medical care. Consideration was also given to the problem of representation at the numerous meetings on international statistical questions; the Sub-Committee decided to discuss this problem at its next session.

19. The Sub-Committee noted with satisfaction that a larger number of countries

were now reporting to the International Trade Statistics Centre and that it had been possible for the agencies to use the Centre to an increasing degree.

20. The Sub-Committee was informed that a new draft of ISIC is under preparation, taking into account the comments received from countries and agencies on the earlier draft circulated by the UN Statistical Office. The new draft will be considered by the next session of the Statistical Commission.

21. A first draft of the groupings of SITC in B.E.C. was prepared to meet the needs of economic analysis. The 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Statistical Commission asked for further revision of the classification and the new draft will be circulated to countries and agencies before submission to the Statistical Commission at its next session.

22. The Sub-Committee heard a statement from the Director of the Forestry and Forest Industries Division of the FAO on the difficulties of classification encountered in the foreign trade statistics of paper and paperboard arising out of technological developments in this field. The Sub-Committee was further informed of the proposal made by OECD for the revision of SITC-REV to meet the new needs. It was agreed that this sector of the SITC needs revision which must take into account not only the new needs of the users, but also the requirements of statistical comparability over time. The Sub-Committee noted that the necessary revisions in the SITC for this purpose would be carried out by the UN in consultation with the FAO.

23. The Sub-Committee recommended that its 2nd Session should take place immediately before the 15th Session of the Statistical Commission in New York in 1968.

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AGENDA

FAO Headquarters, Rome

10 July 1967

1. Election of Chairman
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Procedural matters
4. Questions relating to the Statistical Commission
  - (a) Integrated five-year international statistical program
  - (b) Coordination of world standards
5. Coordination of data collection and work program of interest to all agencies
  - (a) The growing burdens on national statistical offices
  - (b) Training of statistical personnel
  - (c) Technical assistance activities
  - (d) Consistency of published statistics
  - (e) Developments in computer methodology and their implications
  - (f) Population census developments
6. Specific questions directly involving perhaps only two agencies but with some interest to the others
  - (a) Vital statistics
  - (b) Social security statistics
  - (c) Costs of medical care
  - (d) International Trade Statistics Centre
  - (e) The revised draft of ISIC and future course of action
  - (f) Groupings of SITC items in Broad Economic Categories (BEC)
  - (g) Foreign trade classification of paper and paperboard
7. Other business
8. Dates of future meetings of the Sub-Committee

Inter-related Fields of Statistics

1. Statistical techniques and terminology
  - Sampling
  - Household surveys
  - Data processing
2. Census programs
  - Population
  - Housing
  - Agriculture
3. Forest inventory
4. Fishery statistics
5. Trade statistics
  - SITC
  - Definitions and methods
6. Industrial statistics
  - ISIC
7. Labour statistics
  - ISCO
  - Employment, unemployment and under-employment
  - Statistics of wages, hours of work
8. Vital statistics
  - Principles of vital statistics system
9. Education statistics
  - ISCED
10. Financial statistics
  - Balance of payments
  - Public finance
  - Government debt (external)
11. System of national accounts
12. Price statistics
13. Statistics of distribution and transport
14. Health statistics
  - International classification of diseases
  - Principles of health statistics system