



Administrative Committee on Coordination

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ENGLISH ONLY

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS

REPORT OF THE ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES ON ITS THIRTY-FIRST SESSION

(Geneva, 16-18 September 1997)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities held its thirty-first session at Geneva from 16 to 18 September 1997. The agenda is contained in annex I, the list of participants in annex II and the list of documents in annex III.

I. MATTERS FOR ENDORSEMENT OR APPROVAL OF THE CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS

2. The following matters are brought to the attention of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ):

(a) The Subcommittee welcomed (i) the work being done on the promotion and implementation of the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS), and the support that individual organizations were giving it in their work; (ii) the ongoing work on poverty statistics and its dissemination on the World Wide Web pages of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografica y Estadisticos (IBGE) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); (iii) the work at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the development of a core set of indicators for monitoring progress towards widely shared development goals; and (iv) proposals on a core set of indicators associated with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The Subcommittee invited its members to provide the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with any comments on the core set of UNDAF indicators;

(b) The Subcommittee reviewed a request from the United Nations Statistics Division to provide data for inclusion in an inventory of all indicators produced in the United Nations system, which the ACC Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development had requested the Division to develop. Some members of the Subcommittee considered that such an inventory could be useful. However, the Subcommittee (i) was doubtful that the inventory would be used; (ii) expressed concerns about several definitional aspects of what should be included and the input required to set up the initial inventory and to maintain it; and (iii) requested the Division to investigate how the existing inventory of statistical data-collection activities, if well developed and maintained, might be used to meet the perceived needs in place of the proposed new inventory;

(c) The Subcommittee considered a proposal that had been developed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Statistics Division to meet a request by the Statistical Commission for information on the work programmes in statistics of the international organizations, particularly on activities and meetings. The Subcommittee recognized the value of that kind of product for guiding the Statistical Commission and other interested parties into the statistical activities and meetings of the international organizations, but some members expressed reluctance to commit resources to input the data required for that kind of reporting, particularly in cases where they might have provided

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the same or similar data in another format for other reporting purposes. However, there was a general will to participate if a pilot study showed that it could be done with reasonable resource input. Consequently, the Subcommittee agreed that the proposal should be further developed through a pilot effort, and requested the Division, the International Labour Organization (ILO), IMF and the World Bank to participate;

(d) The Subcommittee: (i) elected G. Jones of UNICEF as Chairman of the Subcommittee, with effect from the opening of the thirty-second session in 1998; (ii) decided that immediately following the thirty-first session, the Bureau should comprise: H. Habermann (United Nations Statistics Division; ex officio; term: permanent), J.-M. Leger (World Trade Organization (WTO); term ends 1999), F. Mehran (ILO; Chairman; term ends 1998), A. Flatt (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); term ends 1998) and G. Jones (UNICEF; Chairman elect; term ends 2000);

(e) The Subcommittee welcomed an invitation from the World Tourism Organization to host the meeting of the Subcommittee at Madrid in 1998 or 1999. The Subcommittee recommended that its thirty-second session be held from 16 to 18 June 1998 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The provisional agenda and documentation - subject to review and finalization by the Bureau - was agreed as follows:

Provisional agenda and documentation for the
thirty-second session of the Subcommittee on
Statistical Activities

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Adoption of the report of the thirty-first session.
3. Matters arising from the thirty-first session of the Subcommittee (reports of the Bureau on its intersessional meetings; note by the Secretariat on follow-up to the thirty-first session).
4. Classification of statistics and statistical activities (report by ESCAP, the ILO and the International Statistical Institute (ISI)).
5. Environment statistics (report by the Task Force on Environment Statistics).
6. Reporting on international statistical activities to the Statistical Commission (report by the United Nations Statistics Division, the ILO, IMF and the World Bank).
7. Issues related to the work of the task forces (reports by the task forces).

8. Coordination of the follow-up to the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences (report by the United Nations Statistics Division).
9. Coordination of statistical data-collection activities (report by the United Nations Statistics Division).
10. Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group (report by the United Nations Statistics Division).
11. ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections.
12. Bureau of the Subcommittee.
13. Dates, place and agenda of the thirty-third session of the Subcommittee.

II. WORK OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

A. Matters arising from the thirtieth session of the Subcommittee

1. Policy on provision of copies to other organizations of methodological publications in more than one language, where available

3. The Subcommittee endorsed the recommendation of the Bureau that each organization also provide one free copy of any available language version of its statistical methodological publications to other members of the Subcommittee on request (see SA/1997/2, para. 2), and requested organizations to take steps so that other organizations could become aware of the availability of new methodological publications, for example by placing release information on their home pages.

2. Further development of the coordination tools and how to make them available

4. The Subcommittee endorsed the decision of the Bureau to retain the inventory of statistical data-collection activities (a machine-readable database), but not to spend resources on further updating or developing it or the other coordination tools, namely, the list of classifications used in statistics, the inventory of computerized statistical databases and the annotated list of methodological publications. Instead, the Bureau decided that it was preferable to spend resources on the development of an integrated presentation of the work programmes of the members of the Subcommittee, which was expected to be a significant coordination tool itself (see SA/1997/3, para. 3).

3. Coordination issues arising from implementation of the International Monetary Fund Special Data Dissemination Standard, Development of the Fund's General Data Dissemination System, and the common code of statistical practice in the United Nations system

5. The Subcommittee noted the Bureau's conclusion that in these areas there were no coordination issues to be considered by the ACC Subcommittee at large (see SA/1997/3, para. 5). The Subcommittee further noted that the Bureau had held its meeting prior to additional information about the IMF General Data Dissemination System becoming available. The Subcommittee agreed that, although no coordination issues had to be considered at the current session, the Subcommittee would address such issues if they arose in the future.

4. 2000 Population and Housing Census Programme

6. The Subcommittee noted that the revised recommendations on the above topic had been approved by the Statistical Commission, had been amended by the United Nations Statistics Division, as directed by the Statistical Commission, and had been submitted for editing, translation and printing. The Subcommittee also noted that the ILO was completing a separate publication on economic characteristics of the population.

5. Migration statistics

7. The Subcommittee noted that the revised recommendations on the above topic had been approved by the Statistical Commission and were being amended by the United Nations Statistics Division, as directed by the Commission.

6. Communication by electronic mail

8. The Subcommittee agreed that the experiment with electronic distribution of documents for the session by e-mail and making documents available on a special ACC Subcommittee World Wide Web home page had met the needs of the Subcommittee in respect of document distribution, and that that practice should be continued for future meetings.

7. General issues related to the work of the task forces

9. The Subcommittee noted that the Statistical Commission had reviewed a report on assessment of the work of the inter-agency task forces established by the Statistical Commission in relation to their mandates (E/CN.3/1997/24 and Corr.1), and had established a group to explore new approaches to the structure and operation of the Statistical Commission.¹ The Subcommittee also noted that the draft report of the group, including observations on the functioning of the task forces, would be considered under agenda item 6 (e), "Matters arising from

the work of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group - other matters" (see para. 23 below).

8. Statistical support for policy analysis issues at the international level

10. The Subcommittee noted that the basic issue of concern was the coordination of collection of statistical data from countries. The Subcommittee agreed to the proposal for the United Nations Statistics Division to (a) await responses from countries to an invitation extended by the Chairman of the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination to report on actual cases of duplication experienced by those countries, and (b) subsequently to prepare a report for the Subcommittee along the lines specified by the Subcommittee at its thirtieth session (see ACC/1996/9, para. 29).

9. World statistics day

11. The Subcommittee noted that the Statistical Commission had (a) expressed support for the holding of national and regional statistical days in those countries and regions that already held such days, and encouraged the holding of national statistical days in any countries that might wish to establish such days, and (b) found no consensus in favour of holding a world statistics day.²

10. Provisional agenda and documentation for the thirtieth session of the Statistical Commission

12. The Subcommittee noted that the agenda and documentation had been finalized, reflecting inputs from members of the Subcommittee.

B. Technical cooperation

13. The Subcommittee noted that the informal group established by the Statistical Commission to follow up a proposal on holding a seminar/symposium on good practices related to technical cooperation³ had met on two occasions; the informal group would prepare a report on general good practices in technical cooperation in statistics that would be (a) circulated to central statistical organizations and regional organizations, (b) discussed informally in a wide range of forums, and (c) submitted to the Working Group in February 1998.

C. Issues related to the work of the task forces

1. Task Force on International Trade Statistics

14. The Subcommittee welcomed the report of the Task Force, noted its achievements, and requested it to investigate the issue of inconsistency between the reported imports and reported exports of trading partners.

2. Task Force on Environment Statistics

15. The Subcommittee considered that there was a special need for coordination in the area of environment statistics, and requested the Bureau to prepare for a discussion of that topic at the thirty-second session of the Subcommittee.

3. Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts

16. The Subcommittee recognized the concern on the part of regional commissions that countries would have difficulty with the new national accounts data questionnaire to be implemented in 1999 and would look to the regional commissions for help. The Subcommittee noted that the United Nations Statistics Division would work with the regional commissions to help them prepare to deal with that development.

4. Task Force on Finance Statistics

17. The Subcommittee endorsed the extension of the terms of reference, as proposed by the Task Force in response to a request of the Statistical Commission⁴ that it report on a periodic basis on the work programmes of international organizations, including - as appropriate - regional organizations, in the development and maintenance of methodologies and compilation guides, compilation, processing, dissemination and technical assistance and cooperation in the field of finance statistics (see SA/1997/8/Add.3, para. 13). The Subcommittee agreed that that extension would be subject to review at a later stage if the reporting on work programmes were to be done through a different process, such as the planned integrated presentation of work programmes.

5. Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics

18. The Subcommittee noted that the Statistical Commission had agreed that the Task Force had largely accomplished its goals and should be discontinued.⁵ However, OECD was continuing its commitment to investigate definitions of statistical units used by its member countries, and would report to the Statistical Commission's Working Group.

6. Task Force on Services Statistics

19. The Subcommittee noted the progress of work on the manual on trade in services statistics, and endorsed the Task Force's proposal to change its name

to the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (see SA/1997/8/Add.5, para. 7) to more accurately reflect its current mandate, which focused on problems relating to the collection of data on international trade in services.

D. The statistics part of the ACC programme classification

20. The Subcommittee concluded that additional attention should be directed to defining the purpose(s) to be served by such a classification since that would influence the structure and details; in particular, the requirements to be established for the proposed integrated presentation of work programmes (see para. 25 below) would be important. The Subcommittee requested organizations to send comments on document SA/1997/5 to the ILO, and requested ESCAP, the ILO and ISI to prepare a revised report for the next session of the Subcommittee based on those comments and comments made during the discussion.

E. Coordination of the follow-up to the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences, including the coordination mechanisms that ACC has put in place

21. The Subcommittee welcomed (a) the work being done on the promotion and implementation of MNSDS and the support that individual organizations were giving it in their work; (b) the ongoing work on poverty statistics and its dissemination on the World Wide Web pages of IBGE and ECLAC; (c) the work at OECD on development of a core set of indicators for monitoring progress towards widely shared development goals; and (d) proposals on a core set of indicators associated with UNDAF. The Subcommittee invited its members to provide UNICEF with any comments on the core set of UNDAF indicators.

22. The Subcommittee reviewed a request from the United Nations Statistics Division to provide data for inclusion in an inventory of all indicators produced in the United Nations system, which the ACC Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development had requested the Division to develop. Some members of the Subcommittee considered that such an inventory could be useful. However, the Subcommittee (a) was doubtful that the inventory would be used; (b) expressed concerns about several definitional aspects of what should be included and the input required to set up the initial inventory and to maintain it; and (c) requested the Division to investigate how the existing inventory of statistical data-collection activities, if well developed and maintained, might be used to meet the perceived needs in place of the proposed new inventory.

F. Some critical problems in economic statistics and the role of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities in ad hoc Voorburg-type groups

23. The Subcommittee discussed aspects of the city groups, including the various ways in which they chose to function, how they determined their memberships and how they adopted their work programmes. The Subcommittee welcomed the steps that the United Nations Statistics Division had taken to expand knowledge at the national level of the existence and functioning of those groups. The Subcommittee agreed that members of the Subcommittee had a role to play within the city groups, particularly to reflect the views of non-participating countries.

G. Matters arising from the work of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group: other matters

24. The Subcommittee noted the work on international economic and social classifications. It also took note of a draft report entitled "Begeer and beyond: some additional steps towards more effective international statistical cooperation" prepared by an ad hoc group that had been established by the Statistical Commission. The Subcommittee decided that it did not need to take a position in relation to the draft report but invited members to send any comments that they might have directly to the Convener of the ad hoc group.

H. Functioning of the Subcommittee

25. The Subcommittee considered a brief proposal, put forward by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) in a letter dated 8 September 1997 to the Chairman of the Subcommittee, namely that since the concept of the ACC Bureau had been established, it could fulfil the requirements of the global system, supplemented by short plenary sessions held at the same time as Working Group meetings and perpetual e-mail contacts among Subcommittee members. The Subcommittee considered that the reforms that it had instituted in recent years had resulted in improved coordination, more effective and efficient meetings, and improved attention to the business of the Subcommittee in-between sessions by the Bureau. Although the specific brief proposal was not supported, the Subcommittee agreed that it should make its agenda/meetings more substantive on major issues when they arose, and that the Bureau should contribute by making appropriate preparations for those discussions. The Subcommittee recalled that that was its intention in relation to environment statistics at its next session.

I. Information on statistical programmes

26. The Subcommittee considered a proposal that had been developed by IMF and the United Nations Statistics Division to meet a request by the Statistical Commission for information on the work programmes in statistics of the international organizations,⁶ particularly on activities and meetings. The proposal was presented, in part, through an on-line demonstration of access to a United Nations Statistics Division World Wide Web home page that had been developed for that purpose. The Subcommittee recognized the value of that kind of product for guiding the Statistical Commission and other interested parties

into the statistical activities and meetings of the international organizations, but some members expressed reluctance to commit resources to input the data required for that kind of reporting, particularly in cases where they might have provided the same or similar data in another format for other reporting purposes. However, there was a general will to participate if a pilot study showed that it could be done with reasonable resource input. Consequently, the Subcommittee agreed that the proposal should be further developed through a pilot effort and requested the United Nations Statistics Division, the ILO, IMF and the World Bank to participate.

J. United Nations Economic and Social Information System

27. The Subcommittee took note of the intentions of the United Nations Statistics Division concerning standards for data structure and meta-data in international data exchange and dissemination in the context of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System.

K. ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections

28. The Subcommittee endorsed the decision of the Bureau in which the Bureau had welcomed the decision of the Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections (SCDEP) to invite as observers, organizations whose work was relevant to that of SCDEP, and noted that Eurostat and the International Organization for Migration would be invited to attend the twentieth session of SCDEP in 1998 (see SA/1997/3, para. 8).

L. Chairmanship and the Bureau of the Subcommittee

29. The Subcommittee: (a) elected G. Jones of UNICEF as Chairman of the Subcommittee, with effect from the opening of the thirty-second session in 1998; (b) decided that immediately following the thirty-first session, the Bureau should comprise:

H. Habermann (United Nations Statistics Division; ex officio)	(Term: permanent)
J.-M. Leger (WTO)	(Term ends 1999) ⁷
F. Mehran (ILO; Chairman)	(Term ends 1998)
A. Flatt (ESCAP)	(Term ends 1998)
G. Jones (UNICEF; Chairman elect)	(Term ends 2000)

(c) requested that R. Roberts of the United Nations Statistics Division continue to serve as Secretary of both the Subcommittee and its Bureau.

M. Special topic: preparing budget proposals relating to statistical activities in the United Nations system

30. The Subcommittee welcomed a presentation on the above topic made by Mr. P. Leslie, Secretary of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions), emphasizing budgetary processes under the conditions of reducing resources. A lively question-and-answer and discussion session followed. The Chairman thanked Mr. Leslie on behalf of the Subcommittee, concluding that it had been a very useful coverage of a topical matter of great interest and concern to members of the Subcommittee.

Notes

¹ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4 (E/1997/24), para. 81 (b).

² Ibid., para. 96.

³ Ibid., para. 75 (b).

⁴ Ibid., para. 50.

⁵ Ibid., para. 34 (a).

⁶ Ibid., para. 100 (c).

⁷ Elected for a second term of two years.

Annex I

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Adoption of the report of the Subcommittee on its thirtieth session.
3. Matters arising from the thirtieth session of the Subcommittee.
4. The statistics part of the ACC programme classification.
5. Coordination of ongoing statistical programmes:
 - (a) Integrated presentation of work programmes;
 - (b) Technical cooperation.
6. Matters arising from the work of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination:
 - (a) Issues related to the work of the task forces;
 - (b) Coordination of the follow-up to the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences, including the coordination mechanisms that ACC has put in place;
 - (c) Critical problems in economic statistics;
 - (d) Role of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities in ad hoc Voorburg-type groups;
 - (e) Other matters.
7. United Nations Economic and Social Information System.
8. Preparing budget proposals relating to statistical activities in the international organizations.
9. Other business:
 - (a) ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections;
 - (b) Chairmanship and the Bureau of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities;
 - (c) Dates, place and agenda of the thirty-second session.
10. Adoption of actions and decisions taken at the thirty-first session.

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Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations Statistics Division Department for Economic and Social Affairs	H. Habermann R. Roberts
Economic Commission for Europe	T. Griffin J. Kelly P. Hill
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	A. Flatt
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	P. Sainz
Economic Commission for Africa	O. M. Sy
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	L. Abdunnur
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development	D. Westendorf
United Nations Children's Fund	G. Jones
United Nations Population Fund	H. Jemai
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	W. Gulbinat
United Nations Environment Programme	B. Schanzenbacher

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization	F. Mehran
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	L. Kabat
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	G. Nascimento
World Health Organization	H. R. Hapsara J. Dupenthaler
World Bank	S. Badiee

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International Monetary Fund	C. Carson
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	T. Yamada
<u>Other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations</u>	
Inter-American Development Bank	M. McPeak
Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States	M. Korolev
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	L. Kincannon A. Harrison
Statistical Office of the European Communities	J. Whitworth
World Trade Organization	J.-M. Leger
World Tourism Organization	E. Paci
<u>Inter-agency organizations</u>	
Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Finance and Budgetary Questions)	P. Leslie

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

<u>Document No.</u>	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
SA/1997/1	1	Provisional agenda
SA/1997/1/Add.1	1	Proposed schedule of discussion
SA/1997/2	3	Report of the Bureau meeting, New York, 9 May 1996
SA/1997/3	3	Report of the Bureau meeting, New York, 10 February 1997
SA/1997/4	3	Decisions made at the thirtieth session of the Subcommittee
SA/1997/5	4	The statistics part of the ACC programme classification
SA/1997/6	5 (a)	Not issued
SA/1997/7	5 (b)	Technical assistance in statistics
SA/1997/8	6 (a)	Report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics
SA/1997/8/Add.1	6 (a)	Report of the Task Force on Environment Statistics
SA/1997/8/Add.2	6 (a)	Report of the Task Force on National Accounts
SA/1997/8/Add.3	6 (a)	Report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics
SA/1997/8/Add.4	6 (a)	Report of the Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics
<u>Document No.</u>	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
SA/1997/8/Add.5	6 (a)	Report of the Task Force on Services Statistics

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SA/1997/9	6 (b)	Coordination of the follow-up to the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences, including the coordination mechanisms that ACC has put in place: MNSDS, poverty statistics, indicators of development progress
SA/1997/10	6 (b)	Coordination of the follow-up to the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences, including the coordination mechanisms the ACC has put in place: indicators compiled by international organizations
SA/1997/11	6 (c)	Critical problems in economic statistics
SA/1997/12	6 (e)	Matters arising from the work of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination: other matters
SA/1997/13	7	Report of the United Nations Statistics Division on UNESIS draft standards for data structure and methods in international data exchange and dissemination
SA/1997/14	6 (c)	Issues for the "city groups"
ACC/1996/9	2	Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirtieth session
<u>Document No.</u>	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
ACC/1996/10	9 (a)	Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections on its nineteenth session
ACC/1996/10/Corr.1	9 (a)	Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections on its nineteenth session, Corrigendum
Unnumbered	6 (b)	Monitoring the development and use of statistical indicators by the United Nations Statistics Division

Unnumbered	6 (e)	Begeer and beyond: Some additional steps towards more effective international statistical cooperation
Unnumbered	9 (d)	Functioning of the Subcommittee (letter from Eurostat)
Unnumbered		E-mail addresses of members of the Subcommittee
Unnumbered		Preliminary list of documents
Unnumbered		Preliminary list of participants
