INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS

Report prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office

I. WORK ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS

1. As reported at the nineteenth session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, the Statistical Office work on international migration statistics focused on methods, including the completion of two important technical publications. The first, entitled Consolidated Statistics of All International Arrivals and Departures: A Technical Report 1/ (Series F.No.36) has been published and distributed widely. This publication is now available in English, French and Spanish.

2. The report, recognizing fully the importance of comprehensive statistics of population movements rather than merely international migration and tourism, focuses on every form of movement, arrival as well as departure, and describes the information requirements and methods for consolidated collection of detailed statistics. Such a consolidated collection of statistics concerning all movements of persons is essential to improve, inter alia, the quality of international migration, tourism and related statistics. Further, the consolidated data collection will also provide needed data for planning and development of trade, transport, education and other facilities connected with population movements.

3. In this context, developing countries in particular need training workshops/seminars and other technical co-operation in gradually setting up a system for collection of detailed statistics on all arrivals and departures. Extensive co-operation among WTO, the Statistical Office, ICAO, UNHCR, UNCTAD, OECD and other interested organizations is essential and will effectively contribute to the collection and improvement of statistics concerning different categories of international population movements.

4. The second publication entitled National Data Sources and Programmes for Implementing the United Nations Recommendations on International Migration Statistics 2/ was submitted for publication. This report describes a range of approaches to a phased national programme for the improved collection, compilation and tabulation of international migration statistics in accord with United Nations recommendations. In addition, it contains a number of country studies describing the present situation concerning data collection, scope and their international comparability.
5. Since the nineteenth session of the Sub-Committee, however, the methodological work of the Statistical Office in demographic statistics was mainly concerned with the preparations for the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme. As part of these preparations, the Office convened an Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme in New York from 11-15 November 1986. The Expert Group underscored that the existing recommendations contained in Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses 3/ (Series M, No. 67) remained largely valid and therefore, recommended that only a separate publication entitled "Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses" focusing, among other topics, on migration. Accordingly, the draft supplementary document includes a chapter dealing with ways of implementing United Nations recommendations on statistics of international migration adopted in 1979. 4/ More details regarding the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme are given in document SA/1986/25 which is also before the Sub-Committee for its discussion.

6. In addition, work proceeded on the collection of comprehensive statistics on international population movements. For this purpose, revised Questionnaires on International Migration and Travel Statistics that takes into account the United Nations recommendation on statistics of international migration were sent to countries. The data received from countries will be included in the 1985 Demographic Yearbook which is in preparation now. Earlier, the 1977 Demographic Yearbook featured international migration statistics as its special topic and presented comprehensive statistics on this subject.

II. CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

A. World Tourism Organization (WTO)

7. As part of its work on improving statistics of international population movements, UNSO is placing special emphasis on efforts on providing guidance on the use of detailed classification of migrants' origin and destination according to standard country or area codes and groupings. This procedure will enhance the co-operative exchange of data among countries and between population statistics and related economic and social statistics within each country leading to the better utilization of these data. The use of such standard country or area codes also has importance for tourism statistics and therefore, a close co-ordination of this work with WTO will be very useful and necessary.

8. In this context, WTO has recently provided to the Statistical Office a number of documents including one on 'Draft classification on countries and areas recommended for tourism statistics' that was prepared for discussion in the Working Party on Tourism Statistics of the WTO Commission for Europe in Madrid in February 1986. Extensive comments were provided to WTO touching on national practices, definitions and classifications in order to harmonize international tourism, migration and related statistics. It was generally urged to use numerical codes for classification purposes. Further
co-ordination and use of standard country codes for classification in different subject-matter areas, e.g., international trade, etc. may be useful and be taken up by the Sub-Committee on the basis of papers by interested agencies addressing specifically on this topic.

B. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

9. The Statistical Office continued its close co-operation with UNCTAD on the quantitative aspects of the reverse transfer of technology (brain drain) in pursuance of General Assembly resolutions on this subject. Immigrant stock data from 1980 censuses are being compiled which, inter alia, would be useful to studies on international migration of skilled personnel from developing countries. Further, a meeting of governmental experts to review, inter alia, the nature, scale and effect such flows is called for at its fortieth session by the General Assembly, and required inputs to UNCTAD studies on this subject be made by the Office.

III. ACTION BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE

10. The Sub-Committee may wish to:

a) consider steps for enhanced co-ordination, in particular, of use of standard country or area codes for compilation of statistics on population movements and possibly other subject-matter areas; and

b) comment on training needs, workshops/seminars and ways of inter-agency co-operation in setting up a consolidated system for collecting statistics on population movements.

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