ACC SUB-COMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES  
Twentieth Session  
Geneva, 9-13 June 1986  
Item 10 (f) of the provisional agenda

TRADE AND TRANSPORT STATISTICS

Progress Report prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office

External Trade

1. The United Nations Statistical Office continued to process external trade statistics of countries for dissemination to the international community. Progress has been on schedule. The number of country/periods available in the Comtrade data base as at the end of February 1986 is as follows:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>129</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>127</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>127</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td>1982</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>117</td>
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Generally, a country/period data is processed and included in the Comtrade data base as soon as possible, but not later than three weeks of its receipt. Consequently, the Comtrade Data Base is as current as data is made available by countries.

2. Machine-readable commodity trade data for countries which do not provide the Statistical Office with data in this form continue to be compiled from national publications and supplemented by estimates prepared by the Statistical Office. These non-Series D data are available on magnetic tapes for the period 1962-1984.

3. The Compressed Trade Data Base (Comtrade) now comprises 3847 country periods. This occupies 29,469 tracks of disc space which amount to more than 1.25 billion bytes.
4. The microfiche system continued to grow in terms of number of country/period data available as well as in terms of requests from external users. As at the end of February 1986, there were 1963 country/periods as compared with 1876 for the same period in 1985 for annual data. For quarterly data, there was 1421 at the end of February 1986 as compared with 1298 at the same time in 1985.

**International Trade Publications**

5. The 1984 International Trade Statistics Yearbook is still being processed and it is hoped that it will be available on line shortly. The 1981 Supplement to the World Trade Annual is with the Printers and copies are expected in June 1986. The photopages for the 1982 World Trade Annual are also with the Printers - Walker and Company.

6. The Statistical Office continues to have problems with obtaining international trade statistics data from a number of developing countries. Certain countries such as the Philippines and Turkey supply their international trade data on computer printouts - tabulations. Efforts to obtain their data on computer tapes have, despite repeated attempts, failed. The Statistical Office would like to explore with agencies any assistance they might be able to provide through special relationships that they may have with countries, to obtain the necessary statistics from these and other countries.

**Standard International Trade Classification - Revision 3 (SITC, Rev. 3)**

7. SITC Rev. 3 has now been finalized and submitted for translation and reproduction. It will be distributed as soon as it is available, but is available on line. Work has begun on the classification of Broad Economic Categories.

**Trade by Mode of Transport**

8. The annual updating of the analysis of trade by maritime transport in terms of network of goods flows on world sea lanes has continued. Time series for the period 1969-1982 are available in the data bank for each of the 128 commodity groups classified by mode of ocean carriage, such as liquid cargo, dry cargo, general, bulk, etc., and analysed by origin and destination. The latest publication of Maritime Transport Statistics contains the series for the period 1978-1981 and the issue for 1979-1982 will be released shortly.

9. In the last report, the hope had been expressed that it would have been possible to embark on the processing of network of goods flows by air which is requested by ICAO, and that in fact the first set of data would have been available by end of 1985. In trying to accomplish this, the United Nations Statistical Office requested 154 countries to provide their external trade statistics by various modes of transport including air transport.

10. Replies were received from 69 countries and the majority of which failed to supply data in any detailed form. Thus the only available source for the derivation of the data remains total external trade of countries. This means that the methodology for deriving the network of goods flows by air from this source must be developed.
11. Unfortunately, at this time, the Norwegian government which was the major funding agency of the shipping statistics project, (to which unit work on processing network of goods flows by air should have been attached) announced that they were not able to continue funding this project. It therefore became necessary to scale down the work programme of the Statistical Office and freeze the recruitment of a P2 Statistician, who had been envisaged for work on the air statistics. In the circumstances, it is no longer possible to continue work on network of goods flows by air.

Future of the Shipping Statistics Program

12. As has been stated earlier, no financial commitment has been obtained from any source for the continuance of the project. There are barely enough funds to see it through the next two years. Attempts are being made to obtain the support of the International Advisory Group on shipping statistics for a broad financial funding from countries which are represented by that group. Letters have been sent to all members soliciting their assistance and cooperation and it is expected that this group will discuss a paper on the Shipping Statistics project which is being prepared by the Statistical Office at the next Meeting in Cardiff later this year.