TOURIST STATISTICS
(Report by the Secretary-General)

1. The Commission considered international tourist statistics at its ninth session; resolution 23 (IX) reads:

"The Statistical Commission
Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and in co-operation with the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Union of Official Travel Organization, and taking into account the views of the Commission, to seek agreement on the statistical classification to be used in recording the movement of foreign visitors and on the terminology to be used in connexion with the classification, and to suggest methods for collecting statistical data according to the classification, as far as possible without increasing frontier formalities."

Since then, the Statistical Office has co-operated with other interested bodies - particularly the International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO) - and has emphasized the need to take advantage of the practical possibilities which exist for obtaining statistics of international visitors while keeping to a minimum the formalities to which travellers are subjected.

2. At the request of the Economic and Social Council, a group of experts met in Geneva in February 1962 to prepare recommendations concerning the nature, scope and location of a conference on international travel and tourism, including a provisional agenda for the consideration of the Council at its thirty-third
sessions. The experts agreed that the conference would not concern itself with
the technical problems of statistics. They felt, however, that it would assist
the conference to know the views of the Statistical Commission on the definition
of "tourist" or "temporary visitor". The IUOTO has, in this connexion, agreed to
prepare a document for the conference on current definitions used by Governments
for (a) administrative purposes and (b) statistical purposes, and to suggest
a definition which would serve both purposes.

3. International travel statistics are aggregates, the components of which are
drawn from the individual countries of the world. These components inevitably
reflect differences of an economic, geographical, political and administrative kind,
depending on the situation of the country that provides them. The consequence is
that the traveller has to comply with different formalities in each country and
often with different formalities in the same country, depending on the point and
method of entry. The forms which he must fill are often the results of attempts to
comply with a variety of different legal requirements, and they are frequently
unsuccessful.

4. At the opposite end of the scale of obstacles to travel statistics is the
practice, happily a growing one, of doing away with formalities altogether. Here
the abolition of visas and records of arrival and departure has put an end to all
those contacts between the traveller and national officials, which formerly yielded
statistics. Here the use of other methods of obtaining data are essential.

5. Another set of difficulties arises from the fact that the field of
international travel statistics straddles a number of fields of traditional
statistics and has up to now been trying to accommodate itself to definitions and
classifications devised for other purposes, such as population movements,
balance of payments and transport.

6. Past efforts, mainly by the League of Nations and IUOTO, have been directed
to defining what a tourist is. In order to keep the coverage co-extensive with
the area of interest, it has been necessary continually to extend the definition
of tourist to the point where it now includes a number of categories, such as
persons travelling on business of a private or public nature, students, persons
seeking medical treatment. It is clear from these examples that a term such as
"tourist", which has a connotation relating to the purpose of the travel rather
than to the facts, can be unnecessarily restrictive. Moreover, it is a
definition which does not have any counterpart in the official statistics of
many countries. For these reasons, it would be desirable to plan to eliminate
some of these problems by defining the coverage to include all travellers and to
seek a classification of travellers into categories for which data can be
provided by countries.

7. The present categories which IUCTO has recommended consists of: (i) tourists,
who might better be described as visitors, (ii) returning residents, (iii) persons
in transit, (iv) persons coming to work, (v) migrants, (vi) other. It is clear
that international travel statistics have, up to now, been concentrating on
obtaining information on the first category - the visitors. The remaining five
categories are listed merely in order to segregate them from the first category.

8. It may be that too little attention has been given in the past to the
reciprocal nature of international travel. Attention has always been focused on
the "visitor arriving", while ignoring the "resident returning" who alone has all
the information that is necessary for a complete system of international travel
statistics. Moreover, questions put to the traveller at this stage are questions
by the authorities of his country of residence and are less likely to be
misunderstood and resented than questions put to him by the authorities of other
countries. Nor can formalities at this stage be considered any obstacle to
travel. From a purely statistical standpoint, therefore, the best sampling frame
is the total of returning residents and perhaps further study should be given to
designing a short statistical reporting card to be given to a sample of residents
returning after more than twenty-four hours abroad.

9. Hotel statistics are another useful source of data, which is exploited in a
number of countries; they might be made more useful if the hotel records
distinguished from the rest those guests who arrived from another address in the
country. Data resulting from the transport of the visitor may also be useful.
The manifests of ships and aircraft are useful and travellers by ship or aircraft
can be asked to fill forms with less inconvenience to them than travellers over
land frontiers. It is travellers over land frontiers that give the most
difficulty and thus provide the most opportunity for statistical ingenuity; for
instance, the common practice of issuing railway tickets by machine might readily

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yield data, as might also a sample check of road vehicles at points where important highways cross a frontier.

10. The Statistical Commission may wish to take note of the interest in this field of IUOTO (which has consultative status with the United Nations) and of its experience in compiling tourist statistics on an international basis and to recommend that IUOTO, in consultation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations, draw up agreed proposals for the improvement of tourist statistics for submission to Governments for comment.

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