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CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

STATISTICS OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR THE  
SECOND UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE

PROGRAMME OF WORK AND PRIORITIES

Report of the Fourth Session of the Working Group on International  
Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
INTRODUCTION	1 - 3
I. PUBLICATIONS OF STATISTICS	4 - 22
A. General considerations	7
B. Publication of statistics	8 - 20
C. Collection, processing and storage of statistics	21 - 22
II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN STATISTICS	23 - 32
III. INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES, 1973 - 1977	33 - 44
A. Content and form of future reports	35 - 39
B. High-priority projects	40 - 44

IV. ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING	45 - 53
A. Electronic data processing facilities	46 - 51
B. Organizational matters	52 - 53
V. DATE AND PLACE OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP	54 - 55

## INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth session of the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination took place from 21 to 23 June 1972 at Geneva.
2. J. Ripert (France) was elected Chairman.
3. The agenda of the meeting was as follows:
  - (1) Election of Chairman
  - (2) Adoption of agenda
  - (3) Publications of statistics
  - (4) Technical assistance in statistics
  - (5) Electronic data processing
  - (6) International Statistical Programmes, 1973-1977
  - (7) Date and place of the fifth session of the Working Group
  - (8) Other business

### I. PUBLICATIONS OF STATISTICS

4. The Working Group based its discussions of the recommendations of the "Report on recurrent publications of the United Nations" by Robert M. Macy of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/71/8, hereafter called the JIU report), in respect of the publication, collection, processing and storage of statistics, mainly on document E/CN.3/439. The document quoted the recommendations of the JIU report, coupled in each case with the pertinent background information and the comments of the Secretariat. The JIU report and "Recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the statistical bulletins of the Economic Commission for Europe" (Conf.Eur.Stats/312/Add.1), which was to be discussed by the Conference of European Statisticians at its twentieth plenary session, were also made available to the Working Group.
5. The Working Group noted that Conf.Eur.Stats/312/Add.1 complemented E/CN.3/439 in that it dealt with the comments of the JIU report on the specialized statistical publications of the ECE. Document E/CN.3/439 included only a general discussion of the regional statistical publications. The Working Group attempted a very preliminary discussion of these publications. The regional statistical publications ought to be examined by the relevant regional conference of statisticians before the recommendations of the JIU report are considered by the Statistical Commission at its seventeenth session.
6. The Working Group noted that the Economic and Social Council, scheduled to hold its fifty-third session 3 to 23 July 1972, would consider the JIU report and that the Council had requested that its subsidiary bodies transmit

their observations on it to that session. While the Working Group did not object to the presentation of its comments to the Council, the Group emphasized that it could only make very preliminary and general comments on the recommendations of the JIU report in respect of the publication, collection, processing and storage of statistics. In order to submit definitive and more comprehensive comments to the Council on the recommendations, it was necessary that the Statistical Commission scheduled to meet for its seventeenth session 13 to 24 November 1972, should have the opportunity to review the JIU report. The Working Group, therefore, suggested that the Council should consider the recommendations of the JIU report concerning the publication, collection, processing and storage of statistics on the basis of the report of the Statistical Commission on the subject. The Group invited its Chairman to present its views to the Council at its fifty-third session.

#### A. General considerations

7. The Working Group had grave reservations about the recommendations made in the JIU report. The criteria used in the report were too restricted and were applied too rigidly. Disproportionate emphasis was given to reducing expenditures on the publication of statistics. Little or no attention was devoted to the obligation of the United Nations to satisfy the wide range of requirements for internationally comparable statistics, and the recommended criteria for the timeliness of the international publication of statistics were too strict and were used without taking other important considerations into account. Contrary to the recommendations of the JIU report, the Working Group emphasized that duplication in the publication of series of data was required in order to disseminate the data widely for the convenient use of the statistical publications of the United Nations system. Otherwise, the users of these publications would often find it necessary to consult a number of different statistical publications in order to assemble the statistics they require. Furthermore, the costs of publishing statistics are small relative to the costs of gathering and processing the data. The Group agreed with the JIU report that any duplication that existed in the collection of statistics from Governments should be eliminated but considered that the means recommended in the report for ensuring this would create serious obstacles to the efficient collection of timely data.

#### B. Publication of statistics

8. The Working Group considered that a full-scale review of the recurrent statistical publications of the United Nations as in the JIU report, should be undertaken from time to time. The demands for the international publication of statistics shifted as economic and social conditions, arrangements and problems changed. As a result, certain publications of statistics might become obsolete and requirements might arise for the issue of new series of data.

## 1. Criteria for the review

9. The review of the statistical publications in the JIU report had not taken into account the changes in the requirements for internationally comparable statistics that had occurred in the past or that would take place in the foreseeable future. For example, the requirements of the Second United Nations Development Decade would give rise to requirements for the publication of new and more data. Nor had the report given adequate consideration to some of the important implications for the publications of the proposal that the United Nations should be the sole authoritative source of international statistics. The mail canvass that was undertaken of the recipients of selected statistical publications in order to determine the usefulness of the publications could not reveal many of the important uses to which the statistics were put. Wide dissemination of the statistics through the various publications of the United Nations was essential in order that they would be the useful authoritative source of international statistics, and expenditures on publications usually accounted for a very small proportion of the outlays required on statistical works. Furthermore, account had to be taken in applying the criterion of timeliness to the publications of the circumstances in which the data were gathered and issued, the links between the quality and the timeliness of statistics and the purposes to be served by the data.

10. The Working Group concluded that in reviewing the statistical publications, criteria for the requirements for and the uses of the data issued, for the timeliness and quality of the statistics, and for the costs of and the income from the publication in question should be balanced judiciously, in the light of the circumstances in each case. Methods of improving the speed and effectiveness with which the publications were distributed also had to be considered. The Group felt that for the purposes of discussing the JIU report, the Statistical Commission would find it useful to have a table listing each statistical publication, indicating its periodicity and timeliness, and summarizing its content, purposes and uses, circulation, income and costs.

## 2. Timeliness and quality

11. Discussion next turned to the recommendation of the JIU report that data relating to a given month, quarter or year should be issued by the end of the immediately following month, quarter or year, respectively, and that if this were not possible, the publication in question should be issued less frequently, for example, quarterly instead of monthly or every two or three years instead of annually, or should even be dropped.

12. The Working Group considered that while the criteria of timeliness recommended in the JIU report set worthy objectives, they were not realistic goals in the case of the international publication of many series of data

in view of the dates at which a number of countries, in particular the statistically less-developed, were able to supply the information. While it was much more practicable to meet the recommended criteria of timeliness in the case of the national publication of statistics, though a number of countries had not yet met them, the international issue of the data necessarily lagged behind because of the time required for gathering, processing and publishing the national series. The Group recommended that the timeliness of the various series in the United Nations statistical publications should be reviewed and that, where appropriate, ways should be investigated and efforts should be made to improve the situation. This should not be done at the expense of unwarranted reductions in the completeness or reliability of the series, and attention should be devoted to devising ways and means for transmitting data from national statistical authorities to the international statistical offices.

13. The Group emphasized that the frequency with which a statistical publication was issued should not be reduced solely because the desired criteria of timeliness were not met. Nor should the publication be abandoned. These were counter-productive measures. Users of the international publications wished to have data as up to date as could be issued. Less frequent issue of the publication would lengthen the lag between the time at which series were available and the time at which they were issued.

### 3. The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook

14. The Working Group stressed that it was essential to continue to issue a Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and an annual Statistical Yearbook. The Group considered that the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook should be reviewed with a view to enhancing the content, timeliness and rapidity of distribution of the publications. It was recommended that a group of national experts should be convened in 1973 for this purpose.

15. The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics was widely used in the United Nations family, in other international organizations, in the statistical and other agencies of Member States, in private business organizations, and in private research and other institutions, as a convenient source of the most up-to-date, internationally comparable monthly and annual data available on economic and social conditions.

16. The Statistical Yearbook was used by a similarly wide audience as a source of more comprehensive, most up-to-date annual data available. The results of a user survey carried out for the JIU report, as well as the sales of the two publications, attested to their value to a wide audience. According to the user survey, the Statistical Yearbook was used more widely than any other United Nations statistical publication, and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics was very widely used. The number of copies sold of

each publication was large. The Statistical Yearbook was the only publication of the United Nations for which the income from sales significantly exceeded the costs of printing and binding.

17. If the JIU recommendations were followed that the Bulletin should be issued quarterly and that annual data should be shown in only one issue each year in order to reduce costs, not only would the usefulness of the Bulletin be markedly reduced, but also the costs of publishing it would not be significantly cut. Users of the publication would not have the latest available data that they urgently require and they would be unable to discern conveniently trends in, or the significance of, the monthly series shown because annual data would not be given. The costs of gathering, checking and preparing the series of data for publication would probably not be reduced and the costs of printing the publication would not be cut by one-third.

18. If the recommendation of the JIU report that the Statistical Yearbook should be issued once every two or three years were followed, the value of that publication would be markedly reduced. The lag between the time when annual series of data became available and the time when the statistics were issued, would be significantly lengthened. Nor would this step substantially reduce the cost of gathering and compiling the data for printing.

#### 4. Duplication in dissemination of statistics

19. While the JIU report recommended steps designed to eliminate duplication in series of data in various publications, the Working Group pointed out that it was necessary to disseminate international statistics widely and that it was therefore essential in certain cases to issue the same series of data in more than one publication. Users of statistics who wished to ascertain the general economic and social conditions and trends in a given country or region, the distribution of economic activities or resources over countries etc., needed the key series of data from more specialized publications brought together in general publications such as the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook. On the other hand, users of specialized statistical publications wanted the appropriate measures of over-all conditions and trends presented in these publications, so that they might assess the detailed specialized series of data against the background of the over-all measures.

20. Unnecessary duplication in the statistics published by the United Nations system had been practically eliminated through co-ordination activities. An objective of the work on co-ordination by the Statistical Commission and by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination's Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, was to ensure that undesirable duplication in the publication of statistics did not creep in.

C. Collection, processing and storage of statistics

21. The Working Group considered that the JIU report greatly exaggerated the duplication in the collection and processing of data among agencies of the United Nations family. As a result of the work of the Statistical Commission and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities on the co-ordination of statistical activities and the arrangements that had been worked out between the specialized agencies, the regional economic commissions and the Statistical Office of the United Nations, duplication among them in the collection and processing of statistics had been gradually eliminated. There was, however, duplication in the collection and processing of data between the substantive and statistical divisions of some of the specialized agencies and between other international organizations for example, OECD and EEC, and the members of the United Nations family. While strictly speaking, there was no duplication in the collection and processing of statistics among the United Nations agencies, there were problems of inadequate co-ordination in, and insufficient links between, the definition and classification of some of the series that they gathered. Also the timing in the sending and requested return of questionnaires left much to be desired.

22. The Group emphasized that the recommendation of the JIU report that all the statistics sought by the members of the United Nations family should be assembled on a single questionnaire under the auspices of the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities (IOB) and that the IOB should parcel out these series for storage and publication, was impracticable and would raise serious obstacles to the collection and use of the statistics. No government in the world used a single questionnaire to gather all statistics sought. Nor would the recommendation help rectify the deficiencies in the co-ordination and linkages between the various sets of data. The Group considered that what was needed were continued efforts by the Statistical Commission and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities to identify and rectify the deficiencies in the co-ordination of the definitions and classifications of the statistics sought and in the timing of the various questionnaires. It was also suggested that it would be helpful if the Statistical Office of the United Nations, in co-operation with the specialized agencies, were to assemble each year a list of the questionnaires to be sent to national statistical authorities during that year and were to send the lists to national statistical offices promptly so that the national offices could organize their work of responding to the questionnaires. A further suggestion was made that the Statistical Office of the United Nations should make a study of all the questionnaires used.



## II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN STATISTICS

23. This question was considered on the basis of "Statistics: Technical assistance programmes of the United Nations system" (E/5099), which was prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations, in co-operation with the specialized agencies, for the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-second session.

24. The Working Group welcomed the joint efforts of the United Nations and the specialized agencies in providing the detailed information in the report in respect of the technical assistance activities in statistics of the United Nations system. In accordance with the request of the Working Group at its third session, the report covered the technical assistance activities financed (a) under the regular programme of each agency, (b) as large-scale and small-scale projects of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and (c) through other special sources.

25. As in the case of its preceding session, the Working Group stressed that, for purposes of successful implementation of the Second United Nations Development Decade, high priority should be assigned to statistical activities designed to meet the needs of the developing nations and, in particular, to technical assistance in statistics. It was noted that over the period 1969-1971, while the outlays on large-scale projects in statistics and on training fellowships and scholarships had increased, the expenditures on regional technical assistance projects - regional statistical advisers and seminars, workshops and other meetings in the developing regions - had declined and the outlays on small-scale technical assistance projects had remained essentially unchanged. The Group was informed that the situation in respect of regional technical assistance, except in respect of demographic statistics, would deteriorate further in 1972. This would not be so in the case of demographic statistics because of financing from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The Working Group was gratified by the increases in the outlays on large-scale projects and on fellowships, but expressed great regret at the decline in regional technical assistance projects and the stagnation in small-scale country projects. The Group emphasized that the latter forms of technical assistance in statistics, as well as the former, contributed significantly to the required improvement in the statistical services of the developing countries and deserved greater priority. The Working Group also stressed the need to increase technical assistance in statistics furnished to the least developed of the developing countries.

26. The Working Group noted that, in the discussions of E/5099 at the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination's ninth session and at the Economic and Social Council's fifty-second session, various views were expressed concerning the questions dealt with, in particular the desirable modes of financing technical assistance activities. In view of the complexity of programming and financing arrangements that now existed in the United Nations system, the preparation of an integrated scheme of technical assistance activities in statistics was especially important. With the adoption of country programming,

the decision-making process for technical assistance projects was more decentralized. Therefore, the preparation from time to time of coherent reports that covered trends in technical assistance in statistics over about a five-year period was indispensable if the Statistical Commission were to discharge its function of advising the Council on matters of statistical development.

27. The Working Group considered the relative merits of various forms of assistance, in particular the provision of experts to developing countries and training statisticians from those countries. The training of a national cadre of statisticians was the ultimate answer to the lack of qualified statisticians in the developing nations. Therefore, both national and international efforts to increase training activities were desirable. As a cadre of experienced statisticians could be built up only gradually through training activities, it was essential that expert advisers should be provided to those countries - at their request - in order to meet the pressing requirements for statistics. In view of the low stage of statistical development in the least developed among the developing countries, special attention should be devoted to technical assistance to them.

28. The Working Group considered that the review of the integrated scheme of technical assistance should cover trends and developments in all the main forms of technical assistance in statistics and the activities financed from all the sources available for such purposes in the United Nations system. The Working Group hoped that at the time of the review of the first draft of the integrated scheme, it would also have information on the technical assistance in statistics furnished by donors outside the United Nations system, including the bilateral activities of governments.

29. The Working Group recommended that a representative of the United Nations Development Programme should be invited to participate in the discussion of technical assistance matters by the Statistical Commission at its seventeenth session and by the Working Group at its fifth session.

30. The Working Group felt that education in the appropriate use of statistics for purposes of analysis, planning and evaluation was one of the important directions which deserved attention in international training activities. This should be taken into account in training programmes in substantive fields as well as in statistics.

31. The Working Group regretted that due to lack of funds it was not possible to hold a second international seminar on statistical organization in 1972. It was important that this seminar, which was one of the key elements in the programme drawn up to meet the statistical requirements of the Second United Nations Development Decade, should be held in 1973.

The Working Group noted with gratification that, in the absence of financing from the United Nations Development Programme or the United Nations regular technical assistance programme, funds were provided from the United Nations Trust Fund for Development Planning so that a seminar could be held in 1972 in Africa on household sector accounts and statistics of the distribution of income.

32. The Working Group welcomed the information furnished on the seminar to be held for statisticians and planners of Asia, which is scheduled to take place in August-September 1972 at Alma Ata in the USSR. The series of international statistical seminars hosted by the USSR within the framework of technical assistance programmes of the United Nations family were designed to meet the urgent needs of the developing countries for this type of assistance. Another example of technical assistance that the Group noted with gratification was the Interregional Seminar on Electronic Data Processing in Government, 1/ sponsored by the Public Administration Division and the Statistical Office of the United Nations, in co-operation with the Government of Czechoslovakia and financed by UNDP, held at the Computing Research Centre at Bratislava in 1971 and attended by participants from 30 developing countries.

### III. INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES, 1973-1977

33. For the discussion of this item, the Working Group had before it the joint report (E/CN.3/421) of the Statistical Office of the United Nations and of the statistical services of the specialized agencies. In accordance with a suggestion in the report of the Committee for Development Planning on its eighth session, 2/ that report was also made available to the Working Group.

34. The Working Group expressed its appreciation of the efforts of all the organizations that co-operated in the preparation of the joint report. It was considered to be a clear and well-structured statement on the statistical programmes of these organizations.

1/ United Nations, Report of the Interregional Seminar on Electronic Data Processing in Government, Vol. I, Report and technical papers (ST/TAO/M/63) and Vol. II, Papers submitted by participants (ST/TAO/M/63.Add 1).

2/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 7, para 108.

A. Content and form of future reports

35. In view of the successful co-operation between the United Nations and the specialized agencies in meeting the earlier requests of the Working Group for information on programmes in statistics the Group felt it feasible that certain additional tables should be furnished by the organizations of the United Nations system for inclusion in future reports. The additional information would facilitate the Statistical Commission's analysis of these programmes in even greater depth.

36. The additional information required in respect of subsequent five-year programmes, coupled with descriptions, such as those given in E/CN.3/421, of the highest priority projects, would enable both the Working Group and the Statistical Commission to analyse the following types of aspects of the use of resources for statistical purposes:

(a) The balance between the benefits of the programmes planned for the developing countries and for the developed countries;

(b) The balance between the subject matter to which the statistical programmes relate;

(c) The balance between the resources devoted to collecting, processing, analysing and disseminating statistics; and

(d) The balance between new programmes, continuing programmes and discontinued programmes.

The Working Group felt that comments in respect of the balances shown, as appropriate, by the Secretariats concerned would be a welcome feature of the report and would facilitate the consideration of actual and desirable balances by the Working Group and the Statistical Commission. It was also thought that it would be useful to show the share in the total resources for statistical programmes of the high-priority programmes set out in the document.

37. The Working Group recognized that the additional information proposed for inclusion in future reports would in many cases, consist of estimates instead of precise figures. This was so because of the differences in accounting procedures and classification of projects in the various organizations of the system. However, in order to eliminate the major accounting differences, work was in progress on the standardization of the budgets of the organizations. As a result, the comparability of data on expenditures on statistics should increase.

38. The Working Group requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations, in co-operation with the statistical services of the specialized agencies, to draw up an appropriate classification of statistical projects and to submit it for review to the Working Group at its fifth session.

A criterion that should be used in formulating the classification was the government purposes to which the statistics involved in the projects could be put, for example, in formulating macro-economic policies.

39. The Working Group recommended that the Secretariat should explore the possibilities of securing the co-operation of organizations outside the United Nations system in furnishing data about their long-term statistical programmes for purposes of the five-year programme that would be reviewed by the Statistical Commission at its eighteenth session.

#### B. High-priority projects

40. The Working Group discussed various aspects of the high-priority projects set out in E/CN.3/421.

41. The Group approved of the high priority that was assigned to work on the various aspects of demographic and social statistics in view of the emphasis given to social goals in the strategy of the Second United Nations Development Decade and the improvements and extensions in social statistics required for this purpose. It was considered that important aspects of the work on statistics for purposes of the Decade should be (a) the formulation of a list of economic and social indicators for each aspect of the strategy, and (b) identification and rectification of the gaps in the available international standards or guidelines in the light of this list. In view of the increasing dependence of macro-economic policies - fiscal, monetary and balance of payments - on economic indicators, even more accurate and prompt data than available today must be sought. The Working Group was informed that work on this subject was being undertaken. It was considered that too few resources were being assigned to work on statistics of the environment, and it was suggested that considerable attention should be devoted to statistics of research and development and to the statistical applications of electronic computers. Questions were also raised concerning the degree to which the guidelines of the complementary system of statistics on the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation would be taken into account in the work on household budget inquiries.

42. The Working Group expressed its continued interest in the consultations that were designed to meet the statistical requirements of the Second United Nations Development Decade. This should be done through exchanges of views between producers and users of statistics and through regular meetings of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. The Group requested that the Statistical Commission should be informed at its seventeenth session of the consultations undertaken.

43. The Working Group considered that close attention should be paid by the statistical services of the United Nations system to the inadequacies in the statistics of income and of employment, under-employment and unemployment. In this connexion, the Working Group noted the view expressed by the Committee for Development Planning at its eighth session, that:

"If Governments shift their development priorities in favour of the alleviation of mass poverty and unemployment, it is important that their statistical programmes keep as nearly as possible in step by improving their data on manpower and, most particularly, on the distribution of income and certain specific aspects of the quality of life for the very poor." 3/

44. The Working Group agreed that close co-operation between the Committee for Development Planning and the Statistical Commission was an important prerequisite of further work to meet the statistical requirements of the Second United Nations Development Decade. The Group therefore agreed that the participation of the Chairman of the Committee for Development Planning in the deliberations of the Statistical Commission was very desirable and requested that the Secretariat endeavour to make possible his participation at the seventeenth session.

#### IV. ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING

45. As the basis for the discussion of this item, the Working Group had E/CN.3/422 and oral reports on the facilities and work of the International Computing Centre (ICC), Geneva, and on the IOB. Document E/CN.3/422 dealt with (a) the electronic data processing facilities of the ICC, Geneva and the New York Computing Centre (NYCC), (b) the programme of work on an inventory of international and perhaps national data banks of economic and social statistics and (c) topics in respect of the organizational arrangements for electronic data processing. As background information, the section on electronic data processing of A/8490 was called to the attention of the Group.

##### A. Electronic data processing facilities

46. The Working Group noted with gratification the improvements that had been made during the past year in the hardware and software facilities of the ICC, Geneva, and in its rendering of efficient and rapid computer processing services.

47. The acquisition of a new direct access device had simplified and speeded up access to the central computer and the installation of a model 370/155 central computer had markedly increased the capacity to render rapid large-scale or sophisticated computing services. The improvements

3/ Ibid., para. 20.

in the hardware had also reduced the costs of performing the services.

48. Work was in progress on expanding and improving the terminal facilities linked to the ICC, Geneva, on a generalized programming procedure for this purpose and on computerized photo-composition for the publication of data. Questions of efficient integrated data storage and retrieval were being explored and a programme of training personnel from developing countries in systems analysis, programming and computer applications had been developed.

49. The Working Group was informed that the computing centres would be maintained both in Geneva and New York, though it was proposed that a number of activities now being handled by NYCC would - it is hoped - be transferred to ICC, Geneva (including the compilation of practically all external trade statistics and most demographic statistics). The Group noted the view of the Statistical Office of the United Nations that, in order to safeguard the confidentiality of the data supplied to the Statistical Office by national statistical authorities and to ensure that the national authorities are given the appropriate special tabulations, the services of the computing centres in respect of the data bases of the Statistical Office were to be obtained through the Office. The Working Group stressed that arrangements should be such as to ensure a speedy, uncomplicated and economical computer service to Governments in respect of special tabulations, magnetic tapes, etc., of the data bases of the Statistical Office, and expressed concern that there would be delays if work to be done at the ICC, Geneva, had to be channelled through New York. The Statistical Office was requested to review existing arrangements in the light of these questions. The Working Group considered that an important step would be to strengthen the branch of the Statistical Office in Geneva as soon as possible.

50. The Working Group was gratified to note that the Statistical Office of the United Nations, in accordance with the recommendation made at its preceding session, served as an observer, as well as adviser to the representative of the United Nations, on the Management Committee of the ICC, Geneva. This furnished the channel through which the suggestions of the Working Group in respect of the ICC, Geneva, could be brought to bear on the facilities and activities of the ICC. The Working Group stressed the importance of assigning a high priority to the processing and tabulation of statistics in the work of the ICC.

51. The Working Group noted with regret that the Statistical Office of the United Nations still did not have the posts for systems analysts and programmers which the Group at its preceding session, had considered necessary in order to improve and expand the electronic data processing of statistics.

B. Organizational matters

52. The Working Group was informed that the IOB was a subcommittee of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and that it, therefore, consisted of representatives of each of the members of the United Nations family. The IOB had a small secretariat and would carry out its work mainly through task forces. The high-priority projects of the IOB concerned the use of electronic data processing facilities for the work of the United Nations agencies on problems of economic and social development.

53. The IOB, at its third session, established an informal Working Party to draw up the terms of reference of the IOB task force on data banks of economic and social statistics. It was hoped that the Working Party would submit suggestions on this question to a meeting of the IOB in September 1972. Problems existed, and would need to be resolved, on the dividing lines between the terms of reference of the IOB and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities concerning data banks of economic and social statistics. The latter at its sixth session, had made proposals in respect of this question, which were summarized in paragraph 27 of E/CN.3/422. The Working Group hoped that these suggestions would be taken into account in formulating the terms of reference of the IOB, as they drew useful distinctions between the responsibilities of the IOB and the functions of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities concerning data banks of economic and social statistics.

V. DATE AND PLACE OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP

54. The Working Group agreed that, to facilitate the work of its future sessions, it was important that the documentation should be made available in all the working languages well in advance of the sessions.

55. The Working Group recommended that its fifth session should be held in June 1973 in Geneva.

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