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STATISTICAL CLASSIFICATIONS

DRAFT INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED)

Note by the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. At its seventeenth session, the Statistical Commission heard a progress report on the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on its draft International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) "with special reference to measures taken to ensure co-ordination with related statistical classifications and programmes within the United Nations system". 1/ With that in view, the Commission decided to include ISCED on the provisional agenda of its eighteenth session. 2/

I. INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS (ISCO)

2. ISCED's most closely associated classification system in the manpower field is the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), prepared by the International Labour Office. Each statistical classification is, of course, an independent system useful in its own right. ISCO, for example, being a classification of occupations, is based upon occupational criteria, principally the kind of work performed in each occupation, irrespective of the industry in which the work is performed or of the educational qualifications of the individuals in an occupation. ISCED, being a classification of education, has been developed on educational criteria, principally the level and content of fields and programmes of study, irrespective of the occupational plans of those enrolled in the constituent courses. At the same time, the two classifications are related in the sense that many educational programmes have a vocational or occupational emphasis. The majority of the individuals involved in the education process either will move on to employment or are already employed. Thus, a...

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 2, para. 18.

2/ Ibid., para. 22(j).

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although at the international level any relationships adduced between educational qualifications and the qualifications required for particular occupations must necessarily be relatively crude, they do exist. Choice of particular combinations of programmes in determining the groupings in ISCED can enhance its usefulness in cross-classifications with ISCO and many groupings appropriate for this purpose have been made.

5. A few examples of virtually identical groups in the two systems will be found even at relatively broad stages of detail, for example, ISCED 658 and 758 (architectural and town planning programmes), ISCO 0-21 (architects and town planners), ISCED 638 and 738 (law and jurisprudence programmes), ISCO 1-2 (jurists); ISCED 546 and 746 (mathematics and computer science programmes), ISCO 0-8 (statisticians, mathematicians, systems analysts and related technicians). In the main, however, the same or closely related categories occur at more detailed stages of the two systems, most often in such fields of education and work as professional, technical, trade or craft, and stenographic, in which the educational or training requirements for particular kinds of work are commonly made explicit. Examples of this kind abound within such categories as engineering, natural sciences, social and behavioural sciences, agriculture, home economics, library science, stenography, teaching, medicine and health, transport equipment operation, printing, barbering, protective service etc. Over a considerable part of the occupational range, however, no particular groups of related educational or training programmes can be identified as the usual preparation for the kind of work performed in particular occupations. This applies especially to the less skilled service and manual occupations as well as to a large part of such groups as administrative and managerial workers, clerical and related workers, sales workers, production and related workers.

II. INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF ALL GOODS AND SERVICES (ICGS)

4. During the period in which UNESCO has been developing ISCED, the United Nations Statistical Office has been working on ICGS. A very close working relationship has been maintained between the two organizations during this period, with the result that the groupings of educational services in the ICGS follow the ISCED pattern of groups. Because ICGS could not accommodate all the detail in ISCED, it was necessary to combine some of the ISCED categories for inclusion in ICGS. This was done in close consultation with UNESCO, with the result that each of the ICGS categories of educational services is an ISCED category or a combination of ISCED categories. It is planned that this collaboration will continue through the period in which final adjustments are made to the two systems. See also E/CN.3/457 for a discussion of the relationship between ISCED and ICGS.

III. CO-ORDINATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

5. Throughout the development of ISCED, drafts have been sent for comments to all international agencies in the United Nations system and to others. Representatives of these agencies also have been invited to all meetings held on ISCED and, in the main, they have attended and participated in the discussions. All suggestions made by specialized agencies on educational programmes in their fields as far as possible have been incorporated in ISCED.