STATISTICAL COMMISSION

Transfer of Statistical Activities from the League of Nations to the United Nations

(Memorandum by the Secretariat circulated for discussion under Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda.)

I

1. On 21 June 1946 the Economic and Social Council, having considered the report of the nuclear Statistical Commission, requested the Secretary-General "to make arrangements whereby the Secretariat of the United Nations will maintain without interruption the valuable statistical activities of the League of Nations and to submit plans to the Statistical Commission for the future disposition of these activities". E/C.1/Rev.1 section 7

2. This memorandum is submitted to the Statistical Commission in accordance with these instructions. It is however an interim report only. All the Specialized Agencies, which are to work in relation with the United Nations and may have particular interests in its statistical activities have not been fully established and working agreements between them and the United Nations have not all been concluded. Considerable progress has however been made in arranging the transfer of statistical activities from the League of Nations to the United Nations.

II

3. When the United Nations assumed responsibility for the statistical work of the League of Nations the statistical activities of the League of Nations were divided between two units - one in Princeton in the United States and the other in Geneva in Switzerland. Broadly the division of functions between them was that the office in Geneva collected statistics of European countries and the office at Princeton, statistics of countries outside...
outside Europe.


5. The first step taken by the United Nations when it assumed responsibility in August 1945 was to arrange to continue without interruption the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics in Geneva until the end of 1946 so that the organization of the Statistical Office in New York could be built up and the transfer of the work to New York, first from Princeton and then later from Geneva, could take place without interruption of the publication of the Monthly Bulletin. At the end of August 1946 the work of the office at Princeton was transferred to New York and the records they had for non-European countries were moved from Princeton to New York. The Statistical Office in New York then became responsible for the collation and preparation of all data relating to non-European countries. At the same time arrangements were made to photograph copies of basic records for European countries in Geneva and to send those to New York. It was found necessary to ask some countries to supply additional information direct to New York.

6. From the beginning of 1947 the whole of the statistical work of the United Nations has been centred in New York. Arrangements have been made to continue the statistical unit in Geneva on a reduced establishment until the end of March 1947 so that the transfer of work from Geneva to New York can be achieved as smoothly as possible.
III. STATISTICAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

7. Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. As already mentioned arrangements were made in August 1945 to continue without interruption the publication of the Monthly Bulletin of the League of Nations in Geneva up to the end of 1946. Between August and December it was possible to re-introduce in the Bulletin many statistical series for European and other countries which had been discontinued during the war and had been re-started. Moreover the transfer of work from Geneva to New York has provided a unique occasion for making changes in the format and contents of the Bulletin. The first issue of the Bulletin from New York to be published at the end of January will incorporate a number of such changes. Statistics for other countries and for additional topics will be included in the Bulletin during the coming months when the transfer of work from Geneva to New York has been completed.

8. In view of the many changes in the scope of the statistical series of different countries since before the war, it is proposed to prepare a Supplement to the Bulletin describing in detail of the statistical series included in the Bulletin for different countries. It is hoped that this proposal will meet with the approval of the Statistical Commission.

9. Statistical Year-Book. It is intended to re-start the Statistical Year-Book previously issued by the League of Nations. Only preliminary work has so far been possible since the present staff of the Statistical Office has been almost wholly engaged in building up the statistical records of the Office and in preparing the Monthly Bulletin.

10. Other Statistical Publications. It is regretted it is not possible to submit to the Statistical Commission at this Session detailed proposals as to the form in which other statistical publications of the League of Nations will be continued since the form and
character of those publications will depend in part on the completion of working relations with the Statistical Departments of the Specialized Agencies. It is intended however to make arrangements that the statistical material formerly published by the League of Nations will be continued.

IV. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION RELATING TO ECONOMIC STATISTICS

11. The nuclear Statistical Commission gave preliminary consideration to the question of the transfer from the League of Nations to the United Nations of the responsibilities entrusted to the League of Nations under the International Convention relating to Economic Statistics and the Final Act of the International Conference relating to Economic Statistics. The nuclear Commission made no recommendation on this question and it was deferred for consideration by the Statistical Commission itself.

12. The Nuclear Statistical Commission was, however, of the opinion that the functions of the Committee of Statistical Experts set up under the International Convention relating to Economic Statistics should be taken over as rapidly as possible by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

13. A separate memorandum prepared by the Secretariat is being circulated to the Statistical Commission setting out the legal steps necessary if the Commission propose that the United Nations should assume responsibility for the International Convention on Economic Statistics.