Statistical Commission
Thirty-second session
6-9 March 2001
Item 6 (h) of the provisional agenda*
Coordination and integration of statistical programmes

Report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-fourth session

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-fourth session (Washington, D.C., 20-22 September 2000). The report is transmitted to the Commission as requested at its thirty-first session.¹

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I. Introduction

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities held its thirty-fourth session in Washington, D.C., from 20 to 22 September 2000. The agenda is contained in annex I below, the list of participants in annex II and the list of documents in annex III.

II. Matters for endorsement or approval of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions

2. The following matters are brought to the attention of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ):

   (a) The Subcommittee welcomed the decision of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), endorsed by the Conference, to make changes in the classification used in the integrated presentation of statistical programmes of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) in order to make that classification and the revised statistics part of the ACC Programme Classification correspond to the greatest extent possible so that there would be only one classification at the global level; the Subcommittee noted that the CES Classification was more detailed than the ACC Classification and that the greater detail would be retained;

   (b) The Subcommittee took note of the progress made in the global presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology, and agreed that (i) the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) would link the web site on statistical methodology to web sites of the agencies for the “completed work” segment of the database if web addresses were provided; (ii) each organization would designate a liaison person; (iii) UNSD would update the “work in progress” segment from the CES document on the integrated presentation and (iv) for information not in the CES document, organizations would input the corrections and/or additions as necessary, unless they made other arrangements with UNSD;

   (c) The Subcommittee reaffirmed its commitment to its decisions on coordination of statistical data collection from countries as set out in the background document prepared by the UNSD entitled “Main conclusions/agreements on coordination of data-collection activities by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and the Organizational Committee of ACC”;

   (d) The Subcommittee (i) took note of the oral report of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat on the activities of the ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections; (ii) noted that an agreement had not yet been reached between the Population Division and the World Health Organization (WHO) on a common set of estimates of adult mortality and that WHO still intended to produce its own set of estimates; (iii) noted with regret the absence of WHO from the present session of the Subcommittee and felt that its presence would have contributed towards progress on the resolution of this issue; (iv) reiterated the concern it had expressed at its thirty-third session about this development on adult mortality estimates which raised the possibility that two sets of estimates might exist in future, thus putting at risk the continuing availability of a single United Nations set of population estimates; (v) welcomed the efforts of the Population Division to resolve the issues involved; (vi) supported the attempts of the Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections to address the coordination issues involved;

   (e) The Subcommittee decided that immediately following the thirty-fourth session, the Bureau should comprise: H. Habermann (UNSD, ex officio, term: permanent); G. Jones (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Chairman, term ends 2002); P. Garonna (ECE, term ends 2002); and D. Lievesley (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), term ends 2001);

   (f) The Subcommittee accepted an invitation from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to host the thirty-fifth session of the Subcommittee at its headquarters in Vienna. The Subcommittee recommended that its thirty-fifth session be held from 18 to 20 September 2001. The provisional agenda was agreed as follows, subject to review and finalization by the Bureau:
III. Work of the Subcommittee on Statistical Activities

A. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

3. The Subcommittee welcomed the large attendance at the present session which increased its effectiveness, and regretted the absence of some organizations which made the work less efficient and effective in some important fields.

4. The Subcommittee adopted the agenda as set out in annex I. The Subcommittee agreed that it would be useful at future sessions to provide an opportunity for organizations to present information on major new initiatives that they had planned in their work; the Subcommittee requested organizations to do this in the form of short papers (one page) circulated in advance of the session; the item would be added to the agenda for discussion or considered an information item, that decision being made during the adoption of the agenda at the session.

B. Adoption of the report of the Subcommittee on its thirty-third session

5. The Subcommittee adopted the report on its thirty-third session.

C. Matters arising from the thirty-third session of the Subcommittee

6. The Subcommittee noted that all of the matters requiring consideration were scheduled to be taken up at the present session under other items of its agenda.

D. Issues related to the work of the task forces and intersecretariat working groups

(i) Task Force on National Accounts

(ii) Task Force on International Trade Statistics

(iii) Task Force on Finance Statistics
(iv) Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

7. The Subcommittee noted that there were no outstanding coordination issues for the attention of the Subcommittee.

(v) Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services

8. The Subcommittee noted that members of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services would continue to support the planned work of the Task Force set out in document SA/2000/4/Add.1; agencies were requested to reconsider who their most appropriate representative would be on the Task Force once it had agreed on its programme for future work; the question of which organization(s) might undertake the needed additional data-collection activities was left unresolved.

E. Electronic commerce

9. The Subcommittee noted the outcomes of the Conference on Measurement of Electronic Commerce: An International Statistical Institute (ISI) Cutting-Edge Conference 1999, which had been held in Singapore from 6 to 8 December 1999 and was organized by the Singapore Department of Statistics, the National University of Singapore and the Singapore Infocomm Development Authority. The Subcommittee agreed that e-commerce provided challenges to statisticians in concepts, definitions and data collection. The Subcommittee noted that the subject would be considered further at the 2001 session of ISI.

F. Good practices in citation in international statistical publications

10. The Subcommittee welcomed the work done by UNESCO and agreed that the issue had some complex elements and was relevant to the work of all the members of the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee decided that future work should concern only the citation practices of the members of the Subcommittee in their own outputs. The Subcommittee requested UNESCO to further develop the report for the 2001 session of the Subcommittee based on comments from members of the Subcommittee (to be provided to UNESCO by 31 December 2000) and other research that UNESCO offered to undertake, mainly consultation with the International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) and the Working Group on Meta-Information Systems (METIS).

G. Environment statistics

11. The Subcommittee noted the disappointing response to the UNSD data-collection effort in 1999 and the steps that UNSD proposed to take to assess the causes and to plan a further course of action. The Subcommittee welcomed the intention of UNSD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to work together on a report on the status of environmental statistics including organizational arrangements for statistics in countries, and of UNSD, UNEP and UNESCO to consult about focal point responsibilities on statistics and indicators related to water.

H. Classification of statistics and statistical activities

12. For the discussion see paragraph 2 (a) above. In addition, the Subcommittee requested UNSD to issue the approved statistics part of the ACC Classification as an information document for the next session of the Subcommittee with a footnote indicating that the two classifications had been made to correspond to the greatest extent possible; the Subcommittee recalled that the statistics part of the ACC Programme Classification had been approved at the 1999 session of the Subcommittee.

I. The sociodemographic component of the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

13. The Subcommittee took note of the draft sections of the revised General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) Guide addressing the data dimension of the sociodemographic component of the GDDS; several agencies provided suggestions on the draft. The Subcommittee noted that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would revise the draft, taking account of the suggestions made and any
additional suggestions that might be made by agencies up to 6 October 2000.

J. Global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology

14. For the discussion, see paragraph 2 (b) above.

K. Coordination of development indicators in the context of the follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

15. The Subcommittee took note of the work being undertaken on the development indicators web page; UNSD undertook to try to simplify the technical aspects and make the system easier to use; agencies agreed to provide the requested information. Also, see paragraph 2 (c) above for the related discussion on coordination of data collection.

16. The Subcommittee recognized the importance of user/producer dialogues, particularly in the context of increasing demands for statistics and the limited capacity of countries and agencies to meet these demands. The Subcommittee noted the need for sharply focused, well-prepared dialogues and:

(a) Requested organizations, in particular IMF and Eurostat, to share their experiences in this area, with a view to promoting a better understanding of how to successfully organize a dialogue, by providing a brief summary of their experience to the members of the Subcommittee by 1 December 2000;

(b) Encouraged all the members of the Subcommittee to consider undertaking such dialogues as they deemed feasible and appropriate;

(c) Requested UNSD, as secretariat to the Statistical Commission, to consider ways in which the Commission might be involved in the promotion of these dialogues;

(d) Requested UNSD to explore the use of the existing General Assembly panel series in the promotion of dialogues;

(e) Requested the members to report back at the next Subcommittee meeting with a view to developing a set of good practices in articulating the gap between the demands for statistics and the ability to provide them.

L. Progress on the Paris 21 initiative

17. The Subcommittee took note of the report of OECD on progress made on the Paris 21 initiatives to help support sustainable statistical systems, and noted the ongoing activities of the Paris 21 task forces on advocacy and population censuses.

M. Outcome of the seminar organized in the context of Geneva 2000 on “Monitoring and Benchmarking Social Development”

18. The Subcommittee took note of the report of ECE on the outcome of the seminar organized in the context of Geneva 2000 on “Monitoring and Benchmarking Social Development”.

N. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report

19. The Subcommittee took note of a progress report that UNSD provided on the work of the “Friends of the Chair” that had been established by the Statistical Commission to review the accuracy of the statistical information in Human Development Report 1999.1 It welcomed the intention of UNSD to circulate the report of the experts to members of the Subcommittee as soon as it was released by the Chairman of the Statistical Commission. The Subcommittee welcomed the proactive steps that were being taken by the Human Development Report Office to enhance the use and presentation of statistics in the Human Development Report.

O. Tourism satellite account

20. The Subcommittee expressed concern that OECD had issued the publication Measuring the Role of Tourism in OECD Economies: The OECD Manual on
Tourism Satellite Accounts and Employment, without sufficient methodological, procedural and historical references to the forthcoming joint UNSD/OECD/Eurostat/World Tourism Organization “Tourism Satellite Account (TSA); Methodological References” which had been adopted with certain modifications by the Statistical Commission in March 2000; the OECD publication appeared to be substantively different from the joint UNSD/OECD/Eurostat/World Tourism Organization document. The Subcommittee requested its Chairman to write to the Secretary-General of OECD expressing these concerns.

P. Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission and identifying emerging issues that the Statistical Commission might address

21. The Subcommittee noted that, under other items of its agenda, the necessary collaboration on preparations for the session of the Statistical Commission in 2001 had been discussed, namely work of the task forces (national accounts and statistics of international trade in services) and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, coordination of development indicators, integrated presentation of the work of the international organizations in statistical methodology, and the UNDP Human Development Report. The Subcommittee also noted that work was being undertaken for the 2001 session of the Statistical Commission in the fields of human settlements statistics, the labour statistics supplement to the tourism satellite account, gender statistics — time use, the city groups, review of social statistics by a programme reviewer (Statistics Netherlands), the International Comparison Programme, the Handbook on Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting, international economic and social classifications, analysis of data availability to meet the policy needs of major United Nations conferences and summits: directions of work and preliminary findings, and the Handbook of Statistical Organization. The Subcommittee noted and encouraged the necessary collaboration by Subcommittee members.

22. In respect of follow-up to the 2000 session of the Statistical Commission, the Subcommittee noted that any necessary action that involved members of the Subcommittee had been covered under other agenda items of the Subcommittee; alternatively, the matters had been dealt with directly among the involved organizations.

23. Several suggestions were made concerning the multi-year work programme of the Statistical Commission, namely, the desirability of the Commission’s considering aspects of the statistical work of specialized agencies, and the collection of disaggregated statistics by international organizations (including the uses of disaggregated statistics and the reporting burdens on countries). The Subcommittee agreed that the latter item should be discussed in a session of the Subcommittee prior to a decision to include it in the Commission’s work programme; the Subcommittee considered that such an approach would be useful for a variety of topics in which both the Subcommittee and the Commission might have an interest.

Q. Policy on dissemination of statistics in electronic form

24. The Subcommittee welcomed the reports that had been written by agencies on this topic and considered it a valuable exchange of information. The Subcommittee noted that many decisions relating to dissemination were made outside the statistical divisions of organizations. The Subcommittee considered that one particular aspect required further attention at the next session of the Subcommittee, namely, that of disseminating statistical data on the Internet and the associated pricing policy; the Subcommittee welcomed an offer from OECD to prepare a paper setting out some of the issues.

R. Quality assurance, arrangements with common questionnaires and conflicting statistics

25. The Subcommittee welcomed the reports that had been written by agencies on this topic.

S. ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections

26. For the discussion, see paragraph 2 (d) above.
T. Availability of methodological publications on the Internet

27. The Subcommittee recognized the importance of international statistical guidelines and recommendations being made available on the Internet and encouraged members to work towards this.

U. Provision of data by countries to international organizations

28. The Subcommittee noted that there were occasional requests from countries to international organizations to pay for the provision of normally available national statistical data; the Subcommittee further noted the provision of data to organizations free of charge was specified in the articles of membership for some organizations and in other cases was provided for by resolutions and normal practice.

V. Coordination of data collection from national sources

29. The Subcommittee noted that an established process was in place for coordination among the members and that contact with national statistical offices had revealed occasional overlaps in regular data collection which had been dealt with.

W. Bureau of the Subcommittee

30. For the discussion, see paragraph 2 (e) above.

X. Dates, place and agenda of the thirty-fifth session of the Subcommittee

31. For the discussion, see paragraph 2 (f) above.

Y. Report of the Subcommittee on its thirty-fourth session

32. The Subcommittee adopted the report on its thirty-fourth session and requested the Bureau to select important items to be brought to the attention of the Statistical Commission by the Chairman of the Subcommittee.
Annex I

Agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Adoption of the report of the thirty-third session.
3. Matters arising from the thirty-third session of the Subcommittee.
4. Issues related to the work of the task forces and intersecretariat working groups.
5. Electronic commerce.
7. Good practices in citation in international statistical publications.
8. Classification of statistics and statistical activities.
10. Global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology.
11. Coordination of development indicators in the context of the follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.
12. Quality assurance, arrangements with common questionnaires and conflicting statistics.
15. ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections.
16. Other business:
   (a) Provision of data by countries to international organizations;
   (b) Coordination of data collection from national sources;
   (c) Progress on the Paris 21 initiative;
   (d) Outcome of the seminar organized in the context of Geneva 2000 on “Monitoring and Benchmarking Social Development”;
   (e) The sociodemographic component of the General Data Dissemination System of the International Monetary Fund;
   (f) Tourism satellite account;
   (g) Identifying emerging issues that the Statistical Commission might address;
   (h) Bureau of the Subcommittee;
   (i) Dates, place and agenda of the thirty-fifth session of the Subcommittee.
Annex II

List of participants

United Nations entities and programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Statistics Division
H. Habermann
R. Roberts (Secretary)
A. Me

Population Division
J. Chamie

Division for Public Economics and Public Administration
L. Willmore

Economic Commission for Europe
P. Garonna

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
P. Sainz

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
A. Flatt

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
H. A. Sayed

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
A. Butkevicius

United Nations Development Programme
H. S. Fu
T. Griffin

United Nations Environment Programme
A. Singh

United Nations Children’s Fund
G. Jones

United Nations Population Fund
R. Leete

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization
F. Mehran

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
L. Naiken

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
D. Lievesley

International Civil Aviation Organization
O. Nazarov

World Bank
S. Badiee
E. Swanson
International Monetary Fund

C. Carson
J. Bové
M. Fitzgibbon

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

T. Yamada

Other international and non-governmental organizations

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

D. Ward

Statistical Office of the European Communities

J. Whitworth
M.-H. Figueira

World Tourism Organization

A. Massieu

World Trade Organization

R. Jackson
## Annex III

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<td>Minutes of the second meeting of the Technical Expert Group for updating the Manual on CPI (TEG-CPI), Geneva, 2 November 1999</td>
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<td>Minutes of the third meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics</td>
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<td>Minutes of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics, Vienna, 21-23 March 2000</td>
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<td>Task Force on International Trade Statistics, Vienna, 21-23 March 2000: summary of agenda items for action</td>
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<td>Electronic commerce: note by UNSD on the ISI Cutting-Edge Conference on the Measurement of E-commerce, 6-8 December 1999, Singapore</td>
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<td>Main conclusion/agreements on coordination of data-collection activities by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and the Organizational Committee of ACC: background paper by the Secretariat</td>
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