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(5 to 22 APRIL 1954)

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures.
Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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23 April 1954



STATISTICAL COMMISSION

Report to the Economic and Social Council on the eighth session of the Commission, held in Geneva, from 5 to 22 April 1954

Introduction

MEMBERS ATTENDING THE EIGHTH SESSION

1. The Statistical Commission held its eighth session at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 5 to 22 April 1954.

2. The following representatives and alternates attended the sessions:

- Australia*: Mr. S. R. Carver.
- Canada*: Mr. H. Marshall.
- China*: Mr. Choh-Ming Li.
- Cuba*: Mr. R. Masferrer.
- Denmark*: Mrs. R. Skade (alternate).
- France*: Mr. R. Rivet, Mr. R. Dumas (alternate).
- India*: Mr. P. C. Mahalanobis, Mr. M. Mukherjee (alternate).
- Iran*: Mr. N. Samii, Mr. A. Khajehnouri (alternate).
- Netherlands*: Mr. Ph. J. Idenburg, Mr. J. Dijkgraaf (alternate).
- Panama*: Miss L. E. Quesada.
- Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic*: Mr. L. M. Koretsky.
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*: Mr. T. V. Ryabushkin.
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*: Mr. H. Champion, Mr. J. Stafford (alternate).
- United States of America*: Mr. S. A. Rice.
- Yugoslavia*: Mr. D. Vogelink, Mr. A. Macura (alternate).

3. Mr. Champion, Chairman of the seventh session, presided at the opening of the eighth session. The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics submitted the following draft resolution for the Commission's consideration:

"The Statistical Commission decides to invite a representative designated by the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China to take the rightful place of China at its eighth session."

The Chairman ruled the proposal out of order, as the Statistical Commission was a subordinate organ of the Economic and Social Council, which was the competent body to deal with any modifications in the membership

of the Commission. The representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic supported the representative of the Soviet Union and challenged the ruling of the Chairman. The ruling was put to the vote and upheld by 9 votes to 3, with one abstention.

4. The following representatives of specialized agencies attended the session:

- International Labour Organisation*: Mr. R. J. Myers, Mr. H. P. Lacroix.
- Food and Agriculture Organization*: Mr. P. V. Sukhatme, Mr. L. P. D. Gertenbach.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*: Mr. B. A. Liu.
- International Monetary Fund*: Mr. W. R. Gardner.
- International Civil Aviation Organization*: Mr. A. M. Lester.
- World Health Organization*: Dr. Y. Biraud, Dr. J. S. Peterson.
- Interim Commission for the International Trade Organization*: Mr. H. Staehle, Mr. G. Hortling.

5. The following representatives of non-governmental organizations with consultative status were present at the session:

CATEGORY A

- International Chamber of Commerce*: Mr. H. Toulouse.
- International Co-operative Alliance*: Mr. M. E. Boson.
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*: Mr. H. Pateet, Mrs. A. Tompkins-Effront.
- World Federation of Trade Unions*: Mr. T. Drinkwater.

CATEGORY B AND REGISTER

- Catholic International Union for Social Service*: } Miss J. de Romer.
- International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues*: }
- International Statistical Institute*: Mr. G. Goudswaard, Mr. J. W. Nixon.

SECRETARIAT

6. Mr. W. R. Leonard, acting as representative of the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. P. J. Loftus, Mr. B. N. Davies, Mr. W. W. Flexner, Mr. B. Helger, Mrs. F. M. Nowak, Secretary to the Commission.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE EIGHTH SESSION

7. The Commission unanimously elected the following officers for the eighth session:

Chairman: Mr. P. C. Mahalanobis (India).

Vice-Chairman: Mr. R. Rivet (France).

Rapporteur: Mr. Ph. J. Idenburg (Netherlands).

AGENDA

8. The Commission adopted the following agenda for the eighth session:

1. Introduction.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. External trade statistics.
5. Index numbers of wholesale prices.
6. Industrial statistics.
7. Distribution statistics.
8. Social statistics.
9. Housing statistics.
10. Education statistics.
11. Measurement of levels of living.
12. Population census activities.
13. Vital statistics.
14. Statistical education and training.
15. Review of international statistics.
16. International Convention relating to Economic Statistics.
17. Conference of European Statisticians.
18. Time reference for agricultural statistics.
19. Progress reports:
 - (a) Classification of occupations.
 - (b) Balance-of-payments statistics.
 - (c) Classification of Government accounts.
 - (d) Price and quantity indexes.
 - (e) National accounts.
 - (f) Statistics of capital formation.
 - (g) Distribution of income.
20. Priorities of the Commission's programme.

External trade statistics

9. In reviewing the progress made in this field, the Commission noted with satisfaction the advances in international comparability which had resulted from recommendations on external trade statistics made at its seventh and earlier sessions. Progress in the application by countries of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) had been rapid: thirty-two countries (accounting for nearly 70 per cent of world trade) now present their trade statistics according to the SITC and over twenty more are arranging to do so in the near future. To assist countries, detailed commodity and alphabetic indexes to the SITC have been produced showing the classification of about 20,000 articles important in external trade. These indexes constitute the most detailed international lists yet produced for such a purpose. The SITC is being used by a number of

Latin American countries as the basis of a uniform customs nomenclature. The general use of the SITC, together with the notable co-operation of a large number of countries in supplying their external trade data to the Secretary-General, had permitted the publication of current world trade data each quarter by commodity groups of the SITC analysed by countries of provenance and destination.¹ In addition, the existence of data classified on the uniform international basis had facilitated the compilation by the Secretary-General of preliminary indexes showing for world trade the movement of unit values for raw materials, food, agricultural products, minerals and manufactured goods.

10. The definition of "transaction value" approved by the Economic and Social Council on the recommendation of the seventh session of the Commission had for the first time provided countries with an internationally agreed standard conforming with the underlying reality of international exchanges of goods. Most countries will be able to accept the definition in major particulars. Definitions of coverage and of countries of provenance and destination, also made at the seventh session, had enabled many governments critically to examine the methods they use in compiling external trade statistics and to consider means of making the statistics more directly useful and more comparable internationally.

11. The Commission discussed the progress made in adopting the transaction value. It noted that, although the valuation of imports intended by the "Convention on the Valuation of Goods for Customs Purposes" (drawn up in Brussels on 15 December 1950 and to which many European governments are signatories) appears to be the transaction value, information provided to the Secretary-General had indicated some doubt as to the interpretation of the Convention. One signatory appeared to consider that the Convention did not exclude the use of the open-market value in the importing country, and there was consequently an uncertainty as to the actual practices of countries in implementing the Convention. Delegates to the Commission of governments signatory to the Convention volunteered to study the matter. The Commission was informed in detail of the progress made by countries in adopting the transaction value (E/CN.3/172) and,

"The Statistical Commission"

"Recommends that the Secretary-General ascertain and report upon the valuation practices in use in the different countries and, where countries are not at present able to adopt for national purposes the definition of transaction value recommended by the Economic and Social Council, study appropriate methods of obtaining supplementary data relating to the transaction value.

"The Commission further recommends that Member Governments be requested as far as possible to provide periodically in the descriptions of their external trade statistics, not only the legal definition of value, but also a statement of the methods used in practice for the valuation of goods moving in external trade."

¹ *Commodity Trade Statistics*. United Nations Statistical Papers, Series D.

12. At its seventh session, the Commission had requested the Secretary-General to consult with Member States on certain problems relating to the coverage of external trade statistics and to the methods of attributing imports and exports to countries of provenance and destination. The Commission discussed the results of these consultations on the basis of a memorandum by the Secretary-General (document E/CN.3/173). Supplementary considerations on this subject were presented in memoranda by the United States (document E/CN.3/173 Add.1), by the Netherlands (E/CN.3/173 Add.2) and by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (E/CN.3/173 Add.3). The problems relating to coverage were concerned, on the one hand, with the question of whether each of the following categories of goods should be included in the main body of the external trade statistics or tabulated separately: (1) fish landed directly from fishing craft; (2) bunkers and stores delivered to foreign ships and aircraft; (3) ships and aircraft, whether new or secondhand. On the other hand, there was the question of the definition of re-exports and of their separation from exports and from goods in transit.

13. Fish² landed from the original fishing craft is at present treated differently in the statistics of different countries, but, since the countries having important trade of this kind wished it to be included in the statistics and since the representative from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization felt that such an inclusion would be useful in compiling trade and production figures for fish,

"The Statistical Commission

"Recommends that, wherever the size of landings is of importance and wherever it is possible to do so, countries should include in their import statistics fish landed directly from foreign fishing craft and include in their export statistics fish landed abroad by domestic fishing craft."

It was the opinion of the Commission that the attribution of provenance by flag of fishing craft would usually produce figures reasonably equivalent to country of provenance.

14. Many countries regard the provision of bunkers and other stores to foreign vessels and aircraft as domestic trade rather than as an export. But certain countries—particularly countries which import fuel specifically for bunkering purposes—prefer to record the supply of fuel to foreign ships as merchandise trade in order to avoid the appearance of a large deficit in that account. The Commission doubted whether the attribution of bunkers by flag of the vessel concerned would provide information of much economic value owing to the fact that the country of registration may not coincide with the nationality of the owners:

"The Statistical Commission

"Having regard to the report of the committee of experts and to the difficulty of obtaining full and comparable statistics for the trade in bunkers and stores for ships, aircraft and other vehicles:

² It was pointed out that the definition of fish and fishing craft would require further consideration by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Food and Agriculture Organization.

"Recommends that, where important and available, statistics of supplies of bunkers and stores for foreign vessels and vehicles be recorded in a separate account supplementary to the general merchandise trade account."

15. The country to which the import or export of a sea-going ship or an aircraft should statistically be attributed may be very difficult to determine. The country of registration of the ship or aircraft may differ from the country from which the vessel or aircraft operates and from the country owning it. None the less, it is usually possible for the statistical authorities of a country in which a new ship or aircraft is constructed to make a reasonable determination of the country to which it should be attributed, and the latter country will usually, in the case of a new ship or aircraft, have no trouble in determining the country of provenance. In the case of secondhand ships bought and sold, the determination of country of origin and destination is much more difficult, and there is the additional difficulty that the ship may never cross the customs frontier of either the buying or the selling country. The Commission felt, however, that, pending further study by the Secretary-General, the importance of the trade in ships and aircraft justifies the statistical recording of all major transactions involving them:

"The Statistical Commission

"Recommends that new ships and aircraft bought or sold should, wherever possible, be included in the merchandise trade statistics of the countries concerned and that countries should record independently of their trade statistics, the value and tonnage of the secondhand ships and aircraft entering and leaving their registers as a result of transfer of ownership."

16. A number of Member Governments have drawn attention to the difficulties relating to the recording of goods moving from one country to a second country for the use of the armed forces or other official agencies of a third country. This problem had also been raised at the Third Regional Conference of European Statisticians. The Commission felt that this problem required special study and consultation by the Secretary-General.

17. The suggestion of the Commission that, in external trade statistics, re-exports be distinguished from exports has given rise to difficulty because it is not easy to frame rules for distinguishing these classes of movements. Difficulty was also being experienced in achieving international comparability in the attribution of imports by countries. Attribution by country of consignment, the usefulness of which had been commended by the expert group, presented a serious problem to countries whose national practices, sometimes based on the customs law, called for a different system. In addition, certain countries had expressed the view that the wording of the definition of country of consignment required further study and clarification. The Commission recognized the national differences of practice and also of concept which underlay these inter-related difficulties. It felt, however, that further study of this matter might reveal that the actual differences in the data compiled by the various methods of attribution by country were smaller than had been originally supposed. The Commission also felt that

the relation between re-exports and transit trade required further study:

" The Statistical Commission

" Invites the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member Governments, further to examine the possibility of reaching agreement on a more uniform and precise definition and treatment of:

" (a) Re-exports and transit trade,

" (b) attribution by country of provenance;

and to report on the matter to the ninth session of the Commission."

18. At its sixth session, the Commission noted that the list, annexed to the International Convention relating to Economic Statistics, of statistical territories to be shown in statements of external trade had become obsolete in a number of respects. At that session, the Commission agreed on the principle that the customs area of each country, as defined by the country itself, should be the basis upon which the trading partners of each country compile their statistics of trade-by-countries, and asked the Secretary-General to request Member Governments to provide definitions of their customs areas for this purpose. A preliminary list of customs areas summarizing official information from countries was before the Commission at its eighth session (E/CN.3/174). Members of the Commission drew attention to certain aspects in which the draft list required amendment and revision:

" The Statistical Commission

" Invites the Secretary-General to revise the summary of official definitions of customs areas for use in external trade statistics, taking account of the observations made by members of the Commission in the course of the discussion on this subject, and to circulate it to Member Governments with a view to obtaining comments and views before preparing the list for publication."

19. The Commission discussed the methods of compiling indexes of quantum and unit value for external trade which had previously been the subject of consideration at its fourth session. It had before it paper E/CN.3/171 prepared by the Secretary-General. In view of the fact that many countries are compiling their trade-by-commodity figures according to the SITC, the Commission envisaged the possibility of standardizing sub-indexes by commodity class on the basis of the SITC. There was general agreement that the ten "sections" into which the SITC divides all trade were the proper basis for sub-indexes by commodity, and it was suggested that it would be useful to have a further division of those sections referring to manufactured goods (sections 5-8 inclusive) to distinguish consumers' from producers' goods:

" The Statistical Commission

" Recommends that countries should endeavour to compile sub-indexes by commodity classes on the basis of the 'sections' of the SITC and suggests that countries may wish to compile summary indexes for the following categories:

" (a) Food, beverages, and tobacco (SITC sections 0 and 1);

" (b) Manufactured goods other than food, beverages, and tobacco (SITC sections 5, 6, 7 and 8);

" (c) Crude materials other than fuels (SITC sections 2 and 4);

" (d) Fuels (SITC section 3)."

20. The Commission observed that index numbers of quantum are designed to provide approximate measures of changes in the value of external trade when the effects of price changes are removed: similarly, index numbers of unit value (or price) provide approximate measures of the changes in the average price of commodities imported or exported. The Commission considered the problem of determining the reliability of these indexes. Uncertainties in these indexes, it was agreed, stem both from uncertainties (due to changes in the composition of trade) in the unit values computed from the basic commodity headings of the trade statistics and from the arbitrariness inevitable in the choice of a weighting system:

" The Statistical Commission

" Requests that the Secretary-General obtain the views of Member Governments on the methods which they might employ for making a periodic check of the reliability of their indexes of quantum and unit value in external trade to determine, *inter alia*, whether or not a change of base is advisable."

Index numbers of wholesale prices

21. At its seventh session, the Statistical Commission considered the subject of wholesale price statistics and arrived at conclusions on a number of questions relating to the extent of the price data to be collected, the commodities and varieties to be included, the stage of distribution to which the prices should relate and methods of combining price series into index numbers. However, no principles were established for compiling index numbers, either on the traditional commodity system on the one hand or on the so-called sector approach, reflecting money (and commodity) flows on the other. On this question, the Commission had requested the Secretary-General to undertake further discussions with a view to expanding the area of agreement. The Commission reviewed this subject at its eighth session on the basis of a memorandum by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/175).

22. Since the seventh session, the question of wholesale price statistics had been discussed at the Third Regional Meeting of European Statisticians, and among other questions the Regional Meeting had discussed the question of the system of index numbers. The meeting had noted that practices varied from country to country in Europe. While it was generally agreed that index numbers for sectors of the economy were valuable for purposes of economic analysis, there was some doubt expressed on the merits and usefulness of the traditional indexes. The European statisticians had agreed to proceed with the preparation of sector index numbers on an experimental basis so far as possible.

23. In the Commission's discussion, the following points were made:

(a) It was possible to over-emphasize the differences for practical purposes between the traditional and

sector approaches. Both systems depend upon the availability of prices or price indices for individual commodities, in which there is much interest in all countries.

(b) The difference between the two systems arises from differing concepts of the purpose and scope of the index numbers. These contrasting concepts result in differences, in practice, in the methods of:

- (i) Classifying the price quotations (or the averages thereof) to obtain averages for groups of commodities;
- (ii) Weighting the price quotations or the commodity price indexes;
- (iii) Treatment of commodities at different stages of processing.

(c) There was general agreement as to the value of sector indexes for economic analysis. It was pointed out, however, that data (e.g., on sales made outside the sector or purchases from other sectors) which were not available to a number of countries at present were necessary for the compilation of some of the sector indexes, especially for the estimation of the weights.

(d) As to the merits of index numbers of commodity groups, the view was expressed that, where these group index numbers included both raw materials and finished products, they were difficult to interpret. It was pointed out, however, that the narrower and more homogeneous the commodity groups used in these indexes, the easier it was to rearrange and re-weight them to obtain index numbers for industries or small sectors.

(e) A number of members of the Commission stated that they would continue the construction of group indices for commodities at different stages of fabrication and especially of the general wholesale price index for all commodities. A great number of users of statistics were familiar with these groupings and would expect to continue to receive them. Also, in some countries, a great number of business contracts were related to the movements of the general wholesale price index or some commodity group component of it, and for this reason—if for no other—it would be necessary to continue the compilations on this basis. Where the sector indices were in use, however, it was stated that the same problems had been successfully dealt with, the old indices being continued until contracts based on them would expire. Moreover a general wholesale price index could easily be compiled using the data assembled for the sector indices.

(f) The view was expressed that the issues in the controversy having now been discussed and clarified, the right policy for the Commission was to leave the question of the system of index numbers in abeyance for a time, while countries experimented with sector indices which had undoubted economic value. It would be valuable for the Statistical Office of the United Nations to collect and to disseminate information on these experiments and on the sector indices being prepared and published by some countries and to study further the practical problems of collecting the necessary prices and weights for sector indices. The Commission recognized that, while this period of expe-

perimentation is in progress, no definite recommendation as to the relative merits of the two approaches could be made and that for the time being at least many countries would wish to maintain their present system of wholesale price indexes.

(g) "*The Statistical Commission:*

" (a) Wishes to draw the attention of Member Governments not at present compiling price index numbers of the sector type to the usefulness of experimenting with the compilation of such index numbers, selecting first the sector index numbers which are of greatest economic significance in the circumstances of the country;

" (b) *Requests* the Secretary-General to collect information on the progress of such experiments, to circulate information to countries and to report on them to the Statistical Commission at its next session."

Industrial statistics

Enterprise Statistics

24. At its sixth session, the Statistical Commission recommended to countries a specified list of industrial statistics for periodic collection and compilation and requested the Secretary-General to assist countries by preparing definitions of the various recommended items of data. A draft set of definitions was drawn up in the light of extensive discussions in Geneva at the Second Regional Conference of European Statisticians and in Bangkok at the Second Regional Conference of Statisticians in the ECAFE area. Informal consultations on the draft were also held with countries. The Secretary-General presented these definitions in a memorandum entitled "Definitions in Basic Industrial Statistics" (E/CN.3/145), which was considered by the Commission at its seventh session.

25. As a result of the discussion on basic industrial statistics, the Commission, at its seventh session, requested the Secretary-General to make a study of the problems of statistics relating to enterprises (financial structure, type of ownership, etc.) and to present the results of the study to the eighth session of the Commission. Accordingly, the Secretary-General presented a memorandum entitled "Statistics of Enterprises" (E/CN.3/169) describing information about enterprises collected by countries in their industrial censuses, discussing some of the difficulties of obtaining useful information in this field, and making suggestions for further work which might be commended by the Commission.

26. The Commission considered that the statistics of enterprises could be regarded as two entirely distinct subjects, as explained in the Secretary-General's memorandum. Industrial statistics could be collected and analysed according to enterprises instead of according to establishments, which were the traditional units of analysis. The enterprise is a somewhat complex concept, particularly in highly developed economies. There are possibilities of obtaining, by means of enterprise statistics, significant information on the relationships of

different categories of production, employment and resources. The enterprise itself, however, is an entity difficult to define in meaningful economic terms, particularly for international purposes. It can variously be considered as a legal, financial, economic or controlling unit. The Commission considered that insufficient work had been done in this field by countries to permit the presentation of internationally comparable data. It asked, however, that it should be kept informed by the Secretary-General of developments and experiments which might be made by industrial countries.

27. Essential information needed for preparing estimates of national income, stocks and capital formation and balance of payments, for example, can be more conveniently and expeditiously collected by getting returns from enterprises rather than approaching the industrial establishments they control. A statistical study of the structure of industry and trade in each country obviously involved getting information from enterprises.

28. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the statistics of enterprises compiled in different countries and on the sources of these statistics and to investigate their usefulness in the better understanding of economic systems.

Individual Industries

29. At previous sessions, the Commission had discussed problems of statistics of stocks and consumption as two phases of industry on which current statistics were particularly inadequate. The Commission reviewed this matter on the basis of a memorandum by the Secretary-General entitled "Statistics of Individual Industries" (E/CN.3/176). In that memorandum the Secretary-General presented, as examples, certain tables of statistics of the fuel and power industry and of the iron and steel industry. In these tables the data were arranged to show the quantities of the materials used and commodities produced distinguishing different stages of processing and showing stocks and consumption at the different stages.

30. The Commission felt that such studies were important for certain industries and certain commodities, particular mention being made of fuel and power which was the subject of this kind of study in a number of industrial countries. It was felt that presentations of the kind made by the Secretary-General were important in exposing gaps in information particularly for the important raw materials and basic industrial products. The Commission considered that extension of these studies to a wider range of industries involved serious difficulties. On the other hand, there was a great need for studies of the presentation of data on bases which integrated the activities of the different parts of the economic structure as a whole. The Commission noted that such studies had been provided for in the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians and that the result of this work would be reported to the Commission for its consideration at a later date.

31. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to continue work on the subjects of stocks and consumption, assigning priority to such industries as are of special interest to Member Governments.

Industrial Activities of Households

32. The Commission considered the problems of statistics of industrial activities carried on in households, basing its discussion on a memorandum by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/168).

33. The importance of devising methods by which these activities could be measured and included in the statistics of production were emphasized by a number of members. It was pointed out that, in India, household production may account for as much as 80 per cent of the total production while 40 per cent of the total production of the country is not subject to monetary transactions of any kind.

34. The Commission noted that this matter had been the subject of a full discussion at the Third Regional Conference of Statisticians which took place in New Delhi in March 1954. In that discussion which was concerned with national accounts, the importance of the household as a producing unit was emphasized. The problems of measurement involved in this field related mainly to difficulties of collection of data and difficulties of classification where the household was engaged in activities which fell under more than one heading of the International Standard Industrial Classification. It was noted that the collection difficulties were being successfully dealt with in the sampling surveys conducted in India and in Burma. In both these countries, the industrial activities of households had been separately classified from the agricultural activities and the total value of produce had been covered whether the produce was for sale, exchange or own consumption. The method suggested in "A System of National Accounts and Supporting Tables" was somewhat different.

35. The view was expressed that, in statistical studies in this field, attention should be given to the conditions under which the household products were produced and sold and of the sources of supply of the raw materials.

36. In certain countries in which household industrial activities are of importance, it was pointed out that the problems of measurement received added weight from the fact that continuing information on household production was often of importance in formulating national economic policies. It was further pointed out that, in certain countries, there was also a desire to use household production in the most effective manner in an integrated plan of rapid industrial development.

37. The Commission took note with appreciation of the progress being made in this field by means of sample surveys particularly in India. The Commission expressed the hope that such work would be continued and that it might be informed at its next session of the progress of work in this field.

38. The Secretary-General was therefore requested to give attention to the development of standards in statistics relating to household activities with special reference to national income and social accounts.

Distribution statistics

39. The Commission had before it a document (E/CN.3/190) prepared by the International Chamber of Commerce which described the work of the Chamber

on the subject of censuses of distribution. The Chamber also presented a resolution (E/C.2/377) passed by its Council on the need for an international working party to investigate certain problems of method in the field of distribution statistics. The Commission heard a report from the representative of the International Chamber of Commerce on this subject.

40. The Commission emphasized that statistics of the structure of the distribution sector and the resources involved in it were of great importance for many purposes. It was for each country to decide the priority which should be accorded to work in this field. The Commission noted with satisfaction the work on this subject which was being carried on by the International Chamber of Commerce. It noted also that the problems of statistics of current operations of retail and wholesale trade were being studied by the Conference of European Statisticians and would come before the Commission at a later date. The Commission considered that much work required to be done to clarify and define the basic concepts and methods involved in distribution censuses preparatory to consideration of the problem by an expert meeting:

"The Statistical Commission

"Requests the Secretary-General to continue work on the subject of distribution censuses and on statistics of wholesale and retail trade in co-operation with the International Chamber of Commerce giving particular attention to the development of basic concepts and definitions suitable for use internationally."

Social statistics

41. The Commission considered a memorandum by the Secretary-General concerning social statistics (E/CN.3/178). The memorandum outlined the general scope of social statistics and dealt with three subjects of major importance, namely, social stratification, family and household structure, and the distribution of income and wealth. A draft survey on the wider aspects of social statistics and work being done by international agencies in this field was made available to the members of the Commission as a working paper (in English), entitled "Survey of Social Statistics" although it did not form part of the official documentation. In view of the late distribution of this survey it was not possible for the Commission to discuss other aspects of social statistics included in this informative document.

42. There was general agreement that social statistics deserve a high priority among the subjects with which the Commission is concerned and that the Commission would wish to give more extended attention to all aspects of the subject at a later session. Several members reported that great interest in social statistics had been taken in their own countries in recent years, not only by governmental agencies for general policy purposes, but also by business and other organizations.

43. The Secretary-General had discussed the need for social statistics mainly from the point of view of the formulation and administration of government policies aimed at improving conditions of life and had emphasized that the formulation of social policies required the associa-

tion of data on social conditions with a wide range of economic statistics.

44. The Commission agreed with the point of view put forward by the Secretary-General that the development of social statistics is not so much a question of collecting information of a new type as arraying data which are regularly collected in many countries, in such a way as to make possible an analysis of the differences which appear among socially and economically significant groups, and among countries, in regard to various items such as health, nutrition, housing, education, and conditions of work and employment. In this connexion, particular attention should be devoted to the study of the conditions of special groups of the population such as children, aged people, unemployed, physically handicapped, and workers in lower-paid occupations. A great deal of interest is also attached to statistics showing the effects of various measures actually carried out for the improvement of the living conditions of different groups.

45. The Commission also agreed with the view expressed in the Secretary-General's memorandum that a systematic development of social statistics requires more ample and precise knowledge than hitherto has been available in most countries concerning social stratification, family and household structure and the distribution of income and wealth.

46. In regard to social stratification, it was recalled that the Population Commission had discussed the definition of "social status" for census purposes, without arriving at a definite conclusion. The Statistical Commission thought, however, that a satisfactory grouping of population from this point of view might be arrived at by means of a cross-classification of occupation by status (as employer, employee, etc.), in particular if the occupational classification made it possible to distinguish manual and non-manual workers, skilled and unskilled labour and the like. The Commission emphasized the importance of the work carried on by the International Labour Office with a view to establishing a fully developed standard classification of occupations.

47. The importance of family and household statistics had not perhaps been fully recognized in the past. It was the Commission's opinion that the family household, as the basic unit of society, deserves to be studied statistically much more intensely than hitherto bringing out both economic and demographic aspects. Certain recommendations to this effect had been formulated by the Population Commission. The Statistical Commission was of the opinion that such investigations should if possible be carried further by means of an intensified study of a sample of the census returns, or otherwise by means of sample surveys organized *ad hoc*.

48. The Commission was aware of the conceptual and technical difficulties involved in studies of social stratification and of household composition. The Commission considered that the Secretary-General should devote attention to the experience acquired in this respect in recent censuses and otherwise and that definitions, classifications and methods employed be analysed and reported on to the Statistical Commission at its next session. The Commission also felt that countries should

be encouraged to experiment with the different tabulations that might be made to provide data descriptive of the characteristics of different social groups and of the composition of households.

49. The Commission called attention to the recommendation of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling (E/CN.3/114) that sampling surveys be undertaken in order to collect data on family income. The Commission also endorsed the Sub-Commission's statement that "the usefulness of statistics on the distribution by size of family income for purposes of economic analysis would be greatly increased, if they are classified by composition and size, occupation and other family characteristics".

50. The Commission discussed questions of statistics of child welfare, care of the physically handicapped, care of aged people, etc., which are of special interest to the United Nations in view of its activities in the social field. The Commission noted that the Secretary-General, within the limits of available resources, will continue to examine the availability of statistics on these subjects and their adequacy and will present progress reports to the Commission at future sessions.

51. The view was expressed that the Secretary-General and the appropriate agencies should be requested to include in the work programmes in social statistics the question of a detailed study of methods for collecting and preparing statistical data on unemployment and social security, with particular reference to the formulation of methods for obtaining statistics on partial unemployment and the number of unemployed not registered at labour exchanges.

52. The Statistical Commission requested the Secretary-General to continue the study of social statistics with a view, eventually, to the formulation of standards in this field, and to co-operate with the specialized agencies in their fields of social statistics with a view to reporting to the Commission thereon at its next session.

Housing statistics

53. The Commission had before it memoranda by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/187; E/CN.3/187/Add.1) outlining the results of an analysis of items included in recent housing censuses and a discussion of methods which might be recommended with a view to improving statistics on housing and dwellings.

54. The Commission emphasized the importance of adequate and up-to-date statistics in this field and expressed its satisfaction over the substantial efforts to obtain such statistics which have been made by numerous countries in recent years. It was pointed out that statistics on housing pertain not only to the dwelling-unit and its facilities but also require to be supplemented by other kinds of statistics, such as the cost of housing and the proportion of occupants' housing expenditure to their total expenditure. Some members were concerned about the delays which obviously in many cases had occurred in the tabulation and publication of the results of recent housing censuses. In order to avoid delays which reduce the usefulness of data, the Commission

found that it would be advisable not to include too many details in general housing censuses, particularly when they are combined with population censuses.

55. The Commission was informed that the Netherlands, for the purpose of a continuous record of the number and characteristics of dwellings, was planning to organize a system of local registers of all dwelling-units. Yugoslavia is maintaining a housing register for the large cities. The registers were to be kept up-to-date by adding particulars concerning new dwelling-units and by deleting from the register records of demolished houses. Most countries were apparently not in a position to introduce so elaborate a system and would therefore have to rely upon other methods for obtaining up-to-date information on the number and character of dwelling units available and their distribution according to types of households. Examples were given of the successful use of sampling surveys for this purpose.

56. It was also found that sampling surveys could be recommended with a view to supplementing general housing censuses in regard to items such as the floor space of dwelling-units, the deterioration of houses, household facilities, and the mortgages on owner occupied houses, which could not easily be included in censuses. Some countries would undoubtedly have to rely essentially on sampling surveys as the main source for their knowledge of the general housing situation. Sampling surveys would avoid the delays usually encountered in the tabulation stages of a combined population and housing census and at the same time make possible the collection of family and income statistics in connection with data on the physical characteristics of dwellings.

57. It was pointed out that sampling surveys in the field of housing have a diagnostic value in that they are capable of indicating what regions and what sectors of the population suffer from sub-standard housing conditions. They may also be sufficient for a general assessment of the housing problem and broad policy decisions. However, when it comes to the planning and implementation of improvement projects on a local level, detailed surveys are usually indispensable. In view of the emphasis laid by the Economic and Social Council on the need for practical action to improve housing conditions and to increase the supply of adequate family dwellings and community facilities for the lower-income groups (resolution 434 I (XIV)), the Commission requests the Secretary-General to examine what statistics have the greatest interest for practical purposes and what methods are the best suited for their collection and presentation.

58. The Commission took note of the efforts made by the Economic Commission for Europe to assemble and make available statistics for European countries concerning residential construction and related matters, and welcomed a similar initiative, recently taken by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. It was hoped that further studies aimed at achieving greater uniformity of data would be undertaken. It would be desirable for the Secretary-General to obtain as much information as possible on the methods used by countries in compiling statistics on the amount, cost and value of residential construction and on their limitations.

59. Attention was also drawn to the problem of definition which cannot be regarded as solved even with regard to the concept of a dwelling-unit. Not only are there many different types of dwelling-units within a single country or area, but there is also a wide difference in what constitutes a dwelling-unit from one country to another. This subject requires further study, especially as to the definitions and practices of different countries:

"The Statistical Commission

Requests that the Secretary-General:

"(a) Continue to examine national housing and dwelling statistics on the basis of data collected through censuses or sample surveys or in other ways and to give advice and assistance to countries, at their request in planning, organizing, and completing such investigations;

"(b) Study methods and proposals for the development of housing and dwelling statistics by examining the items to be included, and the priorities that should be attached to these items, taking account of social, economic and climatic conditions;

"(c) Re-examine the concepts and definitions currently used in housing statistics taking into account regional and local differences with regard to housing habits, and the characteristics of existing accommodation, with a view to determining what differences are distinctive for regions and countries, and at the same time to look toward the development of a reasonable degree of comparability of data, at least on a regional level;

"(d) Study different methods, such as sampling surveys or the setting up of a permanent register of houses and dwellings, for the purpose of obtaining up-to-date information on occupancy, housing conditions, and the extent of material deterioration of houses, and set out the advantages and disadvantages of these methods from the point of view of the practical problems involved in housing policies and town and country planning;

"(e) Present to the next session of the Commission a report on progress achieved in the field of housing statistics."

Education statistics

60. The Commission considered a memorandum prepared by the Secretariat of UNESCO on "Improving the International Comparability of Statistics on Illiteracy and Education" (E/CN.3/188). In view of its responsibility for co-ordinating the statistical activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, the Commission welcomed this opportunity to discuss in some detail a subject of great importance for the assessment of the social advancement of peoples in all parts of the world.

61. The memorandum presented certain definitions, methods of measurement, classification and tabulation of data relating to illiteracy and education, as proposed by a UNESCO Committee of Experts, and modified in the light of comments received by the UNESCO Secretariat from Member Governments. These proposals were to be submitted to the next General Conference of UNESCO (Montevideo, 1954), and further communicated,

in the form of a draft manual of suggestions for the collection of statistics relating to these subjects, to Member Governments for their comments.

Statistics on illiteracy and educational levels of the population

62. The Commission was of the opinion that statistics on illiteracy are of basic importance to many countries where education is less generally developed, whereas in other countries the interest lies mainly in studies of the educational levels attained by the population.

63. The Commission felt that the ability to read and write is a variable characteristic, so that there is need for a precise definition of what shall be regarded as literacy for the purpose of statistical investigations.

64. The UNESCO Committee of Experts had proposed the following definitions:

"(a) A person is considered literate who can both read with understanding and write a short simple statement on his everyday life.

"(b) A person is considered semi-literate who can read with understanding, but not write, a short simple statement on his everyday life."

65. The Commission considered that the distinction thus introduced between literates and semi-literates was likely to be useful in certain countries where there exist traditional schools where reading but not writing is generally taught.

66. For the purpose of accuracy as well as international comparability, it would seem desirable that suitable objective tests be devised for the determination of literacy as defined by the UNESCO experts. The use of these tests in connection with general population censuses might be difficult, but such tests would undoubtedly be feasible in sample surveys of literacy.

67. In the absence of direct information on literacy status, it had been proposed by UNESCO that four years of formal schooling be regarded as satisfying the criterion of literacy. Although this formula might be useful for certain general purposes of estimation, the Commission felt that it was subject to serious limitations. On the one hand, persons having completed four or even more years of schooling could still relapse into illiteracy through lack of practice and, on the other hand, adults could acquire the ability to read and write without any formal schooling.

Statistics on educational systems

68. The Commission emphasized the difficulties confronting any attempt to achieve international comparability in regard to educational statistics, bearing in mind the great diversity of educational systems in different countries and even within the same country where educational administration is decentralized. Nevertheless, it commended the efforts put forth by UNESCO in working towards some improvement in this field of statistics, in spite of the great difficulties. In the opinion of the Commission, progress in this respect could only be made in gradual stages, with due regard to the different degrees of development of educational systems in various countries or regions. It would seem advisable to start

with a modest programme aimed at improving the comparability in certain broad aspects of education, and to keep sufficient flexibility within this programme to accommodate the needs and conditions of different countries.

69. Detailed comments were submitted by several members of the Commission regarding a number of specific items included in the proposals presented by UNESCO. In particular, attention was called to the fact that statistical data on private schools would be incomplete for many countries, including those countries where certain types of schools are traditionally operated by religious bodies and financed largely by private endowments.

70. Data on educational expenditure are recognized as of great interest, though likely to be difficult to obtain on a comparable basis, particularly in view of the widely different concepts as to coverage and objects of expenditure.

71. Finally, it was suggested that information should also be secured on other aspects such as the sufficiency of material facilities in educational institutions, the accessibility of various types of education to the population, and the proportion of students completing their respective courses of instruction.

72. In the light of the foregoing discussion:

"The Statistical Commission recommends:

"(a) That the statistical services of the United Nations and of UNESCO continue to study the possibilities of improving the international comparability of statistics relating to illiteracy and educational levels of the population;

"(b) That the two secretariats co-operate in appraising the results of the most recent population censuses containing such data, so as to enable the Commission, at its next session, to review the definition of literacy for census purposes (which had been recommended for the censuses taken around 1950) and the tabulation of census results on literacy and other educational characteristics of the population;

"(c) That UNESCO be encouraged to continue its efforts toward the gradual improvement of the international comparability of statistics relating to educational systems;

"(d) That UNESCO be invited, in particular, to examine the possibilities of devising suitable objective tests of literacy, and to develop other aspects of statistics on education relating to such factors as the accessibility of various types of education to the population;

"(e) That an item on the improvement of educational and cultural statistics be placed on the agenda of the Commission for its next session, and that UNESCO be requested to inform the Commission of progress made in this field."

Measurement of levels of living

73. The Commission had before it a report on "International Definition and Measurement of Standards and Levels of Living" by a Committee of Experts convened

by the Secretary-General of the United Nations jointly with the International Labour Office and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (E/CN.3/179). The Committee had been appointed in pursuance of General Assembly resolution No. 527 (VI) and the Economic and Social Council resolution No. 434 B (XIV) for the purpose of reporting "on the most satisfactory methods of defining and measuring standards of living and changes therein in the various countries, having regard to the possibility of international comparisons". In a preface to the report, the Secretary-General had pointed out that the policy-making bodies of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, in their discussion of the over-all planning of international action in the economic and social field, had indicated the need for a definition of the concept "level of living" and for adequate measurements of existing levels of living. Particular interest had centred upon the measurement of levels of living within economically-less-developed countries, where it is important for national and international relief and development programmes to assess needs and to record progress in meeting need.

74. Comments of the Food and Agriculture Organization and of UNESCO on the Experts' report were presented in separate documents (E/CN.3/179/Add.1 and Add.2).

75. The report had not been received by delegations in sufficient time to enable the Commission to consider it in all detail. The Commission, however, was of the opinion that the Experts' report represented a step forward in the discussion of this complex and intricate subject. Although, as pointed out by the experts themselves, the report did not give a final answer to many of the problems involved, it indicated the general direction of the approach to a systematic study of levels of living.

76. The Commission was of the opinion that the Experts were right in confining themselves to a discussion of problems related to existing conditions of life and work, and did not seek to establish standards and norms. The Commission also approved of the terminology adopted by the Experts referring to the terms "level of living", "standard of living" and "norm". "Level of living" refers to actual conditions; "standard of living" refers to the conditions people regard as fitting and proper; "norm" refers to desirable conditions as defined for specific purposes. The Commission recommended that this connotation of "level", "standard" and "norm" be adopted for general use.

77. After having had a preliminary exchange of views, the Commission found itself in general agreement with the Experts concerning their major conclusions—namely, that:

- (a) No single index of the level of living can be devised to measure as a whole differences in levels of living between countries;
- (b) No type of monetary index as a general international measure of levels of living can be recommended;
- (c) The problem of levels of living should be approached by analysis of many "components"

representing generally recognized values (such as those in the fields of health, nutrition, education, etc.) and by the use of various "indicators" for the many types of components;

- (d) The statistical analysis of "indicators" and "components" should be accompanied by background information of a descriptive nature;
- (e) In addition to current efforts in the field of economic and social statistics to improve the factual basis for various inter-country comparisons, family-living studies should be undertaken for the purpose of securing more comprehensive information on the actual conditions of life and work of individuals and families:
- (f) Annual reports on levels of living, as requested by the General Assembly resolution 527 (VI) would not be feasible at present.

78. It was pointed out that the statistical indicators selected by the experts were of different orders in regard to their relevance from the point of view of actual living conditions of individuals and families. Some of the indicators were closely related to these conditions (for example, those which were supposed to measure actual consumption) whereas others referred to available resources and various services (such as medical and educational facilities) and still others to potential means for better satisfaction of needs (total savings, steel and coal supply and other "macro-economic" indicators).

79. The Commission agreed with the experts that an analysis of macro-economic factors should be included in a comparison of levels of living because these give an over-all picture of the economic and social advancement of peoples and are of importance for an interpretation of present living conditions and the appraisal of existing potentialities. However, it was felt that efforts should be made in the first place to assemble statistics which are capable of showing how individuals and families actually live. For this purpose it would be desirable to obtain information not only concerning the availability of various facilities and services, but also concerning their actual use. It might in fact be possible to develop indicators additional to those mentioned by the experts.

80. In this connection, it was stressed by the Commission that national averages and other over-all measures are insufficient for intra- and inter-country comparisons. Statistics concerning various indicators should as far as possible be given in the form of frequency distributions, and by preference they should refer to socially and economically significant groups of the populations concerned. It was found that statistical investigations into social stratification and family and household composition would be of great help if not indispensable for the purpose of such comparisons.

81. The Commission stated that a considerable interest is attached to the study of changes which occur in the levels of living in particular countries. Even though monetary indices were not to be recommended for inter-country comparisons, they could often be used for such studies when only one country was concerned.

Other indicators which are not capable of inter-country comparisons could also be used for such purposes, for example, in regard to under-developed territories, the import of certain durable consumer goods.

82. The Commission noted with approval that the experts had attached great importance to studies concerning unemployment and under-employment in connection with investigations into levels of living. Some members, however, were of the opinion that the recommendations of the experts should have been more explicit in this respect. It is necessary, for example, to take into account the conditions of the unemployed when comparing levels of living. They also considered that while analysing the material or cultural conditions of persons in low-income groups, account should be taken of the presence or absence of social security measures such as the accessibility of health services, educational facilities, and forms and scales of social security.

83. The report had been communicated to the members of the Commission relatively late. For this reason, and in view of the complexity of the problems involved, the Commission was not able to make specific recommendations on various points, brought out in the report. Subject to further consideration and expressing its approval in general terms of the conclusions referred to above:

"The Statistical Commission recommends:

"(a) That the United Nations and the specialized agencies concerned study, each in its own field, the adequacy of the indicators proposed by the experts, as well as the availability and accuracy of statistics relating to those indicators;

"(b) That contact be maintained between the secretariats in the course of this study and that ad hoc working groups be set up, as need may arise and within such resources as can be made available for the purpose, for the discussion of particular points of common interest to the international agencies;

"(c) That, for purposes of co-ordination, the Secretary-General of the United Nations be kept informed of the progress achieved by the specialized agencies, and that a comprehensive progress report be worked out by the Secretary-General for consideration by the Commission at its next session;

"(d) That the Secretary-General examine the possibility of encouraging the use of sample surveys in the manner indicated in the Experts' Report and of expanding technical aid and facilities for training in sampling methods;

"(e) That the Secretary-General distribute the Experts' report to the Member Governments with the request that they examine the proposals therein."

84. The Commission noted that the International Labour Office proposes to set up an expert committee for the consideration of statistical matters relative to family living studies as recommended by the Seventh International Conference of Labour Statisticians, and desires that the United Nations and the specialized agencies concerned should participate in the work of this Committee.

Population census activities

85. In a memorandum on population census activities (E/CN.3/185) the Secretary-General gave an account of the progress made in this field of statistics since the end of the war. The memorandum also contained a summary of United Nations activities aimed at promoting national censuses, standardizing definitions and procedures, assisting countries in the carrying out of censuses and making census results suitable for international comparisons.

86. Several members gave examples of the advantages which individual countries had realized from the recommendations formulated by the Population Commission and the Statistical Commission in regard to census work and from the United Nations methodological studies on this subject. These recommendations mainly dealt with the definition of various items, methods considered suitable for the collection of census data, and certain standard classifications. In the light of the experience gained, it might be found that certain modifications of these recommendations are desirable. The Commission stressed the importance of an early examination of definitions and methods employed in the 1950/51 censuses to determine whether revised recommendations were required for the next round of censuses in 1960/61.

87. There was need, therefore, to determine what types of questions are essential in a general population census, with a view to concentrating on those questions. There was need also to study the extent to which sample surveys could be utilized, in place of complete enumeration, to obtain detailed and supplementary information on certain subjects.

88. Other aspects of the census which in the Commission's view, should receive more emphasis, referred to early national planning and testing of proposed procedures, adequate education for obtaining the co-operation of the public, suitable arrangements for the training of key personnel and methods of speeding up the release of preliminary and final results.

89. One major point gained from past experience was the need for suggestions and recommendations in regard to the tabulation of census data. Many countries had encountered obstacles in this stage of the census work, so that delays and cuts in the tabulation programmes had become unavoidable. In some instances it was clear that essential information would remain untabulated due to the lack of a planned and balanced tabulation programme. General advice on this subject in the form of technical suggestions concerning the overall planning of census tabulations would help many countries to make great economies and would result at the same time in the presentation of more and better information. Study was also needed on the relative advantages of various tabulation methods and on economical methods of reproduction.

90. The Commission felt that an investigation should be made of the extent to which sampling procedures might be proposed for various stages of census operations and for different purposes such as conducting a sample survey in advance of the census, obtaining preliminary results as soon as possible, checking the quality of data collected and in controlling the quality of the data in the tabulation process.

91. The Commission discussed the problem of a standard census period, such as years ending in 0 and 1, to make results readily comparable on an international basis. The Commission was aware that legal, administrative, financial and other considerations often made it impossible for a country to adhere to a particular pattern in the timing of their population censuses. The Commission nevertheless stated that it would be desirable, for the purpose of international studies, that as many countries as possible plan to undertake a census in 1960 or 1961.

92. In the light of these considerations:

" *The Statistical Commission recommends:*

" (a) That the Secretary-General continue to study the methods, definitions and classifications used in the recent censuses, paying special attention to experiences gained in the uses of sampling in connection with the different stages of the census process;

" (b) That the experience gained in conducting recent censuses should be used in developing recommendations for the organization of the 1960 censuses;

" (c) That these draft recommendations should be prepared by the Secretary-General for submission to the Population Commission and to the Statistical Commission."

93. The Commission also had before it a document (E/CN.3/NGO/4) submitted by the Catholic International Union for Social Service recommending certain tabulations of population census statistics. It was pointed out that some countries were in a position to supply data referring to working mothers with young children.

Vital statistics

94. The Commission noted a progress report (document E/CN.3/186) on activities in the field of vital statistics being carried on by the Secretary-General. The view was expressed that the *Principles for a Vital Statistics System*, which had been approved by the Statistical Commission and by the Population Commission at their seventh sessions, was serving a very useful purpose, particularly for the under-developed countries, many of which were attempting to establish complete systems of vital registration. The Commission noted with interest the plans of the Statistical Office to produce a manual of vital statistics methods in the near future, expressing the opinion that this would be a useful and necessary supplement to the *Principles*.

95. In this connection, several members of the Commission expressed interest in the training centres in vital statistics which had been conducted during the past several years; in particular, the Inter-American Centre of Biostatistics in Santiago, Chile, appeared to be performing a valuable task in the training of vital statisticians in Latin American countries; it was hoped that similar training methods could be initiated in other regions.

96. The Commission felt that it was important to give further attention to the need for improving accuracy

in vital statistics especially in under-developed countries and requested that the Secretary-General continue his efforts in this direction.

97. The Commission also took note that sampling surveys could frequently serve as a check on the accuracy of vital registrations. Another check could be provided by censuses of population. In cases where a serious inaccuracy was known to exist in the registration figures, it was pointed out that it was not useful to make detailed cross tabulations of the statistics. These would tend to magnify the original errors and produce very misleading results. Sampling surveys, whether used as a check or not, could be used to relate vital statistics to social and economic characteristics which could not normally be done by the use of the registration record alone. It was pointed out, in reference to vital statistics, that sampling was an auxiliary method and should not be considered as an alternative one to a registration system.

98. Attention was drawn to the desirability of continuing the study of methods and principles which might suitably be recommended to countries which are not yet at a stage of development where they could adopt the conventional registration system as set out in the *Principles for a Vital Statistics System*.

99. The Commission also discussed the use of continuous population registers as alternatives to the conventional registration system. It was noted that many countries had started such registers, or were intending to start them, and the Commission requested that the Secretary-General investigate the use of registers and the methods employed, in order to inform interested countries about the prevailing practices. Particular attention should be paid to the cost of a population register and to administrative difficulties in maintaining it.

Statistical education and training

100. The Commission discussed recent developments in activities directed towards the education and training of statisticians particularly in under-developed countries. The Commission noted the activities of the International Statistical Institute and the Inter-American Statistical Institute. It also recognized the continuing activities of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies in the organization and conduct of regional and international training centres, seminars and conferences. The view was expressed that, even if individual countries developed their own educational and training facilities, there would still be need for regional and international centres. These served the important function of providing a means to exchange information about methods and to co-ordinate technical statistical activities.

101. The Commission noted the various methods that have been evolved to assist countries in the development of their national statistics—the granting of fellowships, direct assistance, education centres, training centres and the preparation of manuals and other training materials. The Commission considered that, at its next session, it should make a systematic evaluation of the results attained by each different element of the programme. The Commission therefore requested the

Secretary-General, in collaboration with the International Statistical Institute, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, UNESCO and other interested specialized agencies, to prepare a report on the character and scope of the present programme of assistance. The report should also evaluate the different aspects of the programme in terms of the requirements of countries for assistance in education and training and for direct assistance.

Review of international statistics

102. The Commission discussed the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/170) dealing with developments in international statistics since the previous report on the subject (E/CN.3/148) to which the present report was supplementary. The present report was confined mainly to the status of work in the development and application of standard concepts, definitions and methods. It included statements of the work programme of the Statistical Office of the United Nations as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Office, the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the International Monetary Fund (as regards balance-of-payments statistics). In addition, the report contained accounts of the programmes of the International Statistical Institute, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation.

103. The Commission expressed general satisfaction with the scope and content of the report, but debated the questions whether future reports should not be even more comprehensive, be organized on a subject-matter rather than on an institutional basis and be prepared less frequently. It was concluded, however, that the report might well be continued in substantially its present form, since a more ambitious plan would probably involve a considerable amount of extra work. Nevertheless, it might be possible that future reports reflect a greater degree of integration along subject-matter lines. As regards the frequency of the report, it was felt that because developments in statistics were occurring rapidly, it was desirable to have a general summary of them available at the beginning of each session of the Commission in order to draw the Commission's attention to developments in the many diverse fields of economic and social statistics. If this were done, it would assist the Commission in dealing in a broad way with the work programme, especially as regards those aspects of it which involve the relationships of one field with another. More comprehensive reports might be issued at longer intervals. The Commission felt it was important to be sure that consistent concepts and definitions were employed in every instance where they would be applicable. The schemes of work of the different agencies should fit together.

104. The Commission particularly welcomed the participation of the specialized agencies in the discussion of the work programmes in international statistics, and expressed the hope that at future sessions of the Commission this participation would continue.

105. The Commission urged that subsequent reports should contain summaries of developments in the applications of statistical sampling. While a wide variety of sample surveys were described in *Sample Surveys of Current Interest*, compiled and published annually by the Statistical Office, what was wanted was some synthesis of these together with an account of assistance in this field provided to countries by the international agencies. In this connection it was brought out that future reports on developments in international statistics should contain more detailed information about all aspects of technical advice and assistance to governments in statistics.

106. The Commission also drew attention to the desirability of periodically preparing a list or annotated bibliography of statistics published or compiled by the international agencies. This would be of value to the work of the Commission, but would serve the interests of the general public as well, since more and more attention was being paid to international statistics, and the publications themselves were not always easily available for examination in many places. The Commission recalled that a provisional list of international series had been drawn up some years ago, at its request, but this list needed to be brought up-to-date and made more generally available.

107. In connection with its review of work being done in the development of statistical standards, the Commission also noted the "Annotated List of International Standards for Statistics" (document E/CN.3/181) prepared by the Secretary-General at the request of the Commission at its seventh session. This list, compiled with the co-operation of the specialized agencies, contains a short description of each standard definition, concept, classification and method recommended by international agencies. The Commission recommended that the Secretary-General keep this list up-to-date as new recommendations are made and circulate it to national statistical offices.

108. In commenting upon the review of developments in international statistics, the Commission noted the suggestion that it might wish to consider whether it should try to establish suggestions for a minimum programme of economic and social statistics which would be available to countries wishing to improve the usefulness of their statistical systems. The Commission generally considered that this proposal was fraught with a number of difficulties. There were a great many factors which determined the scope and nature of a country's statistical programme, and the question of priorities—as, for example, between a population census and an agricultural census—might create additional problems. Nevertheless, the Commission considered that some further attention should be paid to the general proposal that a basic list of important statistical series should be drawn up for use by statistically under-developed countries, since there were situations in which such a list would prove useful to such countries. The Commission felt that particular importance attached to such a programme of statistics when it was directed towards economic analysis in under-developed countries engaged in making plans for economic development and stability. The Commission therefore requested the Secretary-General to give

further attention to this question and to submit a report on it at the next session.

109. The Commission also discussed the need to continue activities directed towards the encouragement of statistical sampling and the exchange of information among countries on new applications of the sampling methods. It considered that the work could be suitably carried on by the Secretariat, possibly with the assistance of *ad hoc* groups of experts from time to time. A group might direct its attention either to a particular problem, or to several closely related problems. It was important in this connection that attention should also be given to the special advantages of multi-purpose sample surveys in under-developed countries and it was necessary that the unity of sampling as a whole be kept in mind in the Secretariat's work.

110. The Commission wished to draw attention to the great importance of statistics in economic programmes for the development of under-developed countries; and it noted with appreciation that a number of countries with well-developed statistical systems were providing scientific and technical assistance in this field. In this connection, the Commission was gratified to be informed by the representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic that the appropriate bodies in the Soviet Union and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic were prepared to give, through the United Nations Technical Assistance Fund, scientific and technical assistance in the field of statistics to those under-developed countries which wished to receive such aid.

International Convention relating to Economic Statistics

111. The Commission considered a memorandum (E/CN.3/180) dealing with the results of an investigation of difficulties encountered by countries signatory to the International Convention relating to Economic Statistics (1928) in view of the possible conflict which could arise between the current recommendations on statistics of the Economic and Social Council and those contained in the Convention.

112. The investigation, undertaken by the Secretary-General at the request of the seventh session of the Statistical Commission, presented a review of the replies received from twenty States Parties to the Convention. The investigation conducted by the Secretary-General also sought the views of signatory States as to whether the Convention should be revised or denounced or whether a new convention should be drawn up.

113. The Commission noted that difficulties were being encountered by some countries, particularly in connection with Articles 3 to 7, and in some of their annexes, and therefore:

"The Statistical Commission

"Requests the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to modify the International Convention relating to Economic Statistics in the light of the discussion."

Conference of European Statisticians

114. The Commission had before it document E/CN.3/191, on the Conference of European Statisticians. Under arrangements established by the Economic and Social Council, regional meetings of European statisticians had been held in 1949, 1951 and 1953. At the last meeting, in order to meet a generally felt need for intensified efforts to improve European statistics, the participants agreed henceforth to meet annually as the Conference of European Statisticians, under the auspices of the United Nations. The participants had elected a Bureau consisting of a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen. Five subjects had been selected for the first work programme, and working groups of national experts had convened on two of these subjects.

115. In discussion, the following points were made:

- (a) It would be necessary to ensure the continuation of an orderly procedure for the discussion of statistical questions by the Statistical Commission and by the Conference of European Statisticians, respectively. This question of course was not confined to Europe, but applied to the other regions in which regional meetings of statisticians were held and in which regional statistical organizations existed.
- (b) Regional statistical meetings could effectively support and complement the work of the Statistical Commission by working towards the implementation of world standards established by the Commission, and by discussing questions of particular concern to the countries of the region. Regional arrangements had an extremely valuable role to play in the practical discussion of statistical problems, and in fields which were not ripe for the establishment of world standards by the Statistical Commission.
- (c) Regional meetings could also take initiative in drawing the attention of the Statistical Commission to statistical questions which in their view need consideration in their wider aspects, and could make proposals on these questions.
- (d) An effective factor in ensuring co-ordination between the two bodies was the close co-operation at secretariat level. In addition, full reports on the work of the Conference would be made to the Statistical Commission.

116. The Statistical Commission took note with approval of the establishment of the Conference of European Statisticians and of the work which it was doing.

Time reference for agricultural statistics

117. The Food and Agriculture Organization requested the advice of the Statistical Commission on how crop production figures of the northern and southern hemispheres could most suitably be combined, i.e., should the crop statistics of the southern hemisphere countries (where harvests are made late in one calendar year and early in the next calendar year) be added to the northern hemisphere figures of that calendar year or to the figures of the next calendar year, or is there some other suitable solution? The fact that different countries and agencies

employ diverse practices leads to considerable confusion in the presentation of the statistics, resulting, in some instances, in one set of world figures showing an increase in total world production, and another set showing a decrease.

118. The present method used by FAO is based upon a decision of the Consultative Committee on Statistical Matters, a Sub-Committee of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination,³ which had agreed, in 1950, that southern hemisphere statistics of crop production should be added to northern hemisphere statistics of the same or previous year (i.e., crops harvested in the crop year 1953/54 would be added to northern hemisphere crops harvested in 1953). This solution had not proved entirely satisfactory in practice, and the FAO suggested (E/CN.3/189) that the procedure should be reversed, or possibly that, for any given country, the statistics of crop production should be attributed to the calendar year in which most of the harvest occurred.

119. The Commission discussed these two proposals, as well as others, but did not reach a conclusion on the alternatives, preferring on the whole that, in principle, present procedure be maintained subject to further review of its practical application by the FAO and other interested international agencies in the hope that a more satisfactory solution could be reached in the future. The Commission considered that there was much to be said for the maintenance of existing production and trade years long established by international bodies for particular crops. It considered that a small group of experts representing regional interests and practices might reach agreement on international practices and make recommendations on national practices to the extent these are involved.

Progress reports

CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

120. The Commission, in document E/CN.3/167, was informed of the work being carried on by the International Labour Office in the preparation of the International Standard Classification of Occupations. The representative of the International Labour Office further explained the status of the work on the Classification which will be considered in detail by the Eighth International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The Commission was pleased to note that every effort is being made by the International Labour Office to complete the Classification at least through two digits well in advance of the time when it will be needed for the purpose of planning the 1960/61 round of population censuses. Special attention was drawn to the need for suitable indexes to the Classification in order that countries could properly classify particular occupations. The Commission desired that the work being done by the International Labour Office on this important question be continued and requested that it be informed at its ninth session of the progress made.

³ This Committee consists of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Directors-General of the specialized agencies.

BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS STATISTICS

121. The Commission heard a report by the representative of the International Monetary Fund on progress in the development of balance-of-payments statistics (E/CN.3/182). It was noted that the forthcoming (fifth) *Balance of Payments Yearbook* will contain statistics for some seventy countries, based upon the classifications contained in the *Balance of Payments Manual*. The statistics will be shown in a standard form permitting international comparisons, with varying sub-items depending upon the particular country. In addition, the separate country tables will be expanded to allow further analysis and they will be accompanied by more textual analysis.

122. The Commission noted the intention of the Fund to undertake the preparation of a revised edition of the *Manual*, which will take account of the changes introduced in the *Yearbook* and offer an opportunity to harmonize certain inter-connected concepts in the *Manual* and the United Nations' *System of National Accounts and Supporting Tables*. The Commission drew particular attention to the desirability of this activity and welcomed this opportunity for the Fund and the United Nations to collaborate. It is planned to carry on the work in the autumn of 1954 by means of a conference.

123. The Commission expressed appreciation of the work being carried on in balance-of-payments statistics and requested that it be kept informed of subsequent activities, particularly the results of the work to integrate the balance-of-payments accounts and the national accounts at the points at which they are inter-connected.

CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

124. The Commission noted the progress report contained in paragraphs 107-108 of document E/CN.3/170 describing the work being carried on by the United Nations in the preparation of a manual for the classification of government financial accounts in accordance with General Assembly resolution 407 (V). The draft manual contains a classification of accounts by economic character, a functional classification and a detailed discussion of the classification of expenditures for economic development. The Commission recognized that the manual was primarily for the information and guidance of under-developed countries and noted especially the many points of inter-connection between the government accounts, on the one hand, and the economic accounts (including balance-of-payments accounts) on the other. The Commission therefore felt that it would be desirable that the Secretary-General submit the draft manual for comments to the national statistical offices as well as to national fiscal authorities. The Commission also requested that the Secretary-General submit a report on this subject to the next session of the Statistical Commission.

PRICE AND QUANTITY INDEXES

125. At its seventh session, the Commission had requested that the Secretary-General continue to study methods by which national product and expenditure estimates could be expressed in constant prices. The Secretary-General had also been requested to study the

various methods used by governments in compiling such data in constant prices and to study the relationship between special-purpose index numbers and the corresponding components of national product and expenditure.

126. The Commission reviewed this subject on the basis of a memorandum by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/177) which constituted a progress report outlining the different methods used in a number of countries and indicating the problems and uses of index numbers of this kind. The Commission's discussion revealed that there was a great need for standardization of the terminology used to describe the various practices of countries in this matter. In order that the Secretary-General might undertake systematically to classify and describe these practices, countries should be encouraged to provide more detailed information on their methods. The subject was still in the experimental stage and much further work was still required. The Commission recognized that the many purposes for which international comparisons of national product and related quantities were required sometimes compelled the Statistical Office and other agencies to compile data which, though adequate for the use envisaged, were interpreted as having wider significance than the compilers intended. The Secretary-General was requested to review data of this kind published by the United Nations and the specialized agencies with the object of ensuring that stringent qualifications were attached to such compilations in the future.

127. The Commission noted that the methods used to express the aggregates in constant prices ranged from detailed revaluations of components product-by-product to the simple application of global price index numbers to current value aggregates. It was pointed out that, in countries where rapid changes were taking place in the form of industrialization, it might be necessary for the countries involved to revalue the products of each year in terms of the prices of the previous year, in order to avoid the distortions involved in comparison with a distant base year:

"The Statistical Commission requests the Secretary-General:

"(a) To continue to collect and examine information from countries on developments in the estimation of national product and expenditure in constant prices;

"(b) To continue to examine the significant uses, forms and methods governing preparation of these estimates, with due attention to the major problems remaining in this work;

"(c) To continue to collect and publish periodically statistics of national product and expenditure in constant prices and information on methods of estimation."

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

128. The Commission had before it a memorandum (E/CN.3/166) describing the progress made since the last session of the Commission with respect to the principles suggested in *A System of National Accounts and Supporting Tables*. The system of accounts had been discussed by the Commission at its seventh session and it

had been agreed that it should be circulated to obtain comments and suggestions from countries which might arise out of their experience in applying the concepts and classifications contained in the report.

129. As one aspect of the task of giving effect to the principles, the Commission noted with special interest the fact that the system of accounts, together with a proposed simplification of the system and certain methodological problems, had been considered by the Third Regional Conference of Statisticians (ECAFE) sponsored by the United Nations. In that Conference, special emphasis had been given to several points concerning which the Commission expressed interest:

- (a) The view that the national accounts were perhaps of greater importance for national uses of various kinds—both in the short run and in the long run—than for purposes of international comparison;
- (b) The need that information on physical quantities (and not merely on monetary values) should be obtained to the greatest extent possible (this was particularly true of such studies as that of consumer expenditures, the amount of own-account construction and basic production series generally);
- (c) The need of sub-classifications in order to distinguish, in the case of primary production, between home consumption and sales; similarly, durable and non-durable consumers' goods should be distinguished.

130. In reference to future work, the Commission felt that the Secretary-General should continue to collect information and circulate it for the information and use of countries, bearing upon experiences in the use of the system of accounts. In this connection, it was suggested that the Secretary-General might draw up lists of specific questions to send to countries so that the results could be as systematic as possible. The Commission also desired that the Secretary-General continue to compile tables incorporating the elements of the system together with detailed notes on the applications of the concepts and deviations which had been made. It was important also that the work on the manual of methods of estimation of national income continue.

STATISTICS OF CAPITAL FORMATION

131. A memorandum by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/165) contained an account of the work done since the last session of the Commission with respect to developments in the field of capital formation statistics. The Commission, at its seventh session, had approved proposals for concepts and definitions and the attention of governments had been drawn to these recommendations. The Secretary-General was accumulating information from countries about the application of the principles and about methods of making estimates of capital formation.

132. Certain aspects of capital formation statistics had been discussed at the Third Regional Conference of Statisticians (ECAFE), which had drawn special attention to the importance of improved estimates of capital formation and to the need to give close study to the

application of the definitions which seemed to vary considerably from country to country. Attention was also drawn at this Conference to the need of reconciliation of estimates of wealth and of net capital formation year by year. Reference was also made to the work on the subject of fixed capital formation which was being undertaken by the Conference of European Statisticians.

133. The Commission urged that the study of methods of estimating capital formation now being carried on by the Secretary-General be completed and that a report on this subject be issued for the use of countries which are trying to improve their estimates. It was also suggested that the Secretary-General prepare an annotated list of items contained in the *Standard International Trade Classification* which might be considered as capital goods.

DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME

134. At its seventh session, the Commission had requested a report on the practices of countries in preparing statistics of income distribution by size and by socio-economic groups. The report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/184) also contained a discussion of the three principal methods employed by countries in compiling these statistics: the use of income tax records and other financial returns, sample surveys and population censuses.

135. It was generally agreed that this was a very difficult subject. Each method had its limitations and the problem of obtaining international comparability, especially as regards the possibility of drawing up comparable socio-economic groupings, had particular difficulties. The Commission considered that statistics on income distribution and expenditure distribution served very useful purposes for time-to-time and regional comparisons within a given country and for certain operational purposes, but that at the present stage international comparison required to be handled with great care particularly between countries with very different economic and social conditions.

136. The Commission considered, however, that it was important to have more information on methods available, and requested the Secretary-General to collect detailed information from countries on their experiences in using one or another of the three principal methods, and to circulate the information to governments. As regards the problem of international comparability, attention was drawn to the possibility of using the categories contained in Table IV of the *System of National Accounts*.⁴

Priorities of the Commission's programme

137. In accordance with resolution 497 C (XVI) of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission reviewed its programme of work bearing in mind Council

⁴ Table IV shows the distribution of national income in the following categories: compensation of employees; income from farms, professions and other unincorporated enterprises received by households; income from property; saving of corporations; direct taxes on corporations; general government income from property and entrepreneurship (less interest on public and consumers' debt).

resolutions 324 (XI), 402 B (XIII) and 451 A (XIV). The Commission had before it a memorandum by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/183).

138. In the course of its discussions, the Commission took note of the satisfactory arrangements which the Secretary-General had established, together with the secretariats of the specialized agencies, for the co-ordination of programmes and the concentration of effort in the statistical field.

139. The Commission wished to emphasize that, as noted in resolution 451 (XIV) of the Council, a large part of the statistical work of the organization consisted in the collection and presentation of data and information essential for the implementation of the major items of the United Nations programme as set out in resolution 451 (XIV). It was noted that statistical sampling, which was integral to the whole field of statistics, fell within this category of work as did problems of accuracy. The Commission felt that more work should be done on sampling particularly because of the discontinuation of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling.

140. The Commission considered the priority which should be accorded to the specific projects of its work programme and established the lists given in paragraphs 141 to 143 below. The Commission noted that the order in which the items were arranged within each of these paragraphs was not intended to reflect the order in which the projects should be taken up. The Commission felt, however, that the proposed work in social statistics and on measurement of the components of the level of living should receive high priority within the resources which may be available.

141. *Continuing Projects of High Priority*

(1) The International Standard Industrial Classification (particularly assistance in implementation).

(2) The Standard International Trade Classification (assistance to countries using the Classification to ensure uniform application and interpretation; collection, compilation and presentation of international statistics based on the Classification).

(3) Advice and assistance in the application of standards for:

- (a) Population censuses,
- (b) Vital statistics,
- (c) Migration statistics,
- (d) Basic industrial statistics,
- (e) Index numbers of industrial production,
- (f) External trade statistics,
- (g) Transport statistics,
- (h) National accounts,
- (i) Capital formation statistics,
- (f) Questions of methodology including sampling.

142. *Ad hoc Projects also of High Priority*

(1) Compilation of an index for the International Standard Industrial Classification.

(2) Examination and appraisal of definitions and methods used in the 1950/51 population censuses, including a study of tabulation plans and methods, with a view to preparing tentative recommendations and descriptive materials for the 1960 round of censuses.

(3) Collection of country comments on and revision of the provisional Item and Alphabetical Indexes for the Standard International Trade Classification (two years); study of national practices in the matter of valuation of commodities in external trade (one year); study of coverage of imports, exports, re-exports and transit trade and of definitions of countries of provenance of imports (two years); revision and publication of official definitions of customs areas (one year).

(4) Industrial statistics, including statistics of enterprises and recommendations for tabulation of data (two years).

(5) Wholesale prices and index numbers thereof (two years).

(6) Price and quantity indexes for the commonly used aggregates.

(7) Statistics of distribution including censuses (two years).

(8) Quantum and unit value (price) indexes in external trade.

(9) Statistics of stocks and consumption (two years).

(10) Study of problems of application of the *System of National Accounts* and *Concepts of Capital Formation* (one to two years).

(11) Compilation of manual on methods of estimating national income, including capital formation and distribution of income (two years).

(12) Social statistics; development of methods, particularly relating to social stratification, social welfare, family and household composition and housing.

(13) Studies of problems of measurement of components of level of living, especially studies of demographic characteristics, consumption and savings, and transport.

(14) Co-operation with the specialized agencies particularly in the field of unemployment statistics.

143. *Projects of Lower Priority.*

(1) Insurance statistics.

(2) Construction statistics.

(3) Road accident statistics.

(4) Iron and steel statistics.

(5) Methods and uses of population registers.

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