STILLISTICAL COMMISSION
Ninth session

PRIORITIES OF THE COMMISSION PROGRAMME
(Memorandum prepared by the Secretary-General)

1. The attention of the Statistical Commission is drawn to resolution 497 C (XVI) of the Economic and Social Council which requests functional and regional commissions to review their programmes for 1955 in the light of Council resolutions 324 (X); 402 B (XIII) and 451 A (XIV), and to include in their reports an account of the progress made in concentrating their efforts on projects of high priority.

2. The Commission will recall that it has made a review of priorities during previous sessions in the light of then existing resolutions of the Council and rules of procedure. Resolution 402 B (XIII), which was adopted subsequent to the sixth session of the Commission, established procedures which are recommended in connexion with the establishment of priorities. These are as follows:

(a) The Secretary-General should report to each commission session the action which he has taken to carry out the commission's programmes according to the priorities previously established, and submit suggestions of priorities for future work, including suggestions regarding projects which might be deferred or eliminated;

(b) The programme of work of each commission should be divided into broad subjects, a differentiation being made, where practicable, between those of higher and lower priority;

(c) The broad subjects should be subdivided into three groups, the first group consisting of continuing projects of high priority, the second group of ad hoc projects also of high priority, and the third group of projects of...
lower priority, which might be deferred or eliminated, or undertaken only in so far as resources permitted;
(d) It is not necessary to indicate the relative importance of individual projects in the first and second groups, respectively mentioned in (c); but, within the group of subjects of lower priority, individual projects should be listed, if possible, in their order of priority, or some indication of priority should be given;
(e) In the case of ad hoc projects, there should be an indication of probable duration;
(f) The Secretary-General, within his existing authority, should have discretion as to the scheduling of work in order that the best use may be made of existing staff and resources and to take account of unforeseen circumstances which may arise.

3. Resolution 451 (XIV) lists six major United Nations priority programmes upon which efforts should be further concentrated. This list was not intended to refer to "methods and techniques" - such as statistics - "which are essential in the implementation of most of these programmes".

4. The following paragraphs, based on the discussion of the Commission at its ninth session, contain the proposals of the Secretary-General on the priorities which might be accorded to the various projects reviewed by the Commission.

5. Continuing Projects of High Priority
   (1) Advice and assistance in giving effect to existing standards or guiding principles for the improvement of national and international statistics:
       (a) population censuses,
       (b) vital statistics,
       (c) social statistics,
       (d) migration statistics,
       (e) basic industrial statistics,
       (f) index numbers of industrial production,
       (g) external trade statistics,
       (h) transport statistics,
       (i) distribution statistics,
       (j) national accounts,
(k) capital formation statistics,
(l) questions of methodology, including sampling,
(m) the development of arrangements for field representatives to assist
countries at their request in planning and giving effect to different
aspects of their national statistical programmes.

6. Ad hoc Projects also of High Priority

(1) Comparative study of national practices in the field of distribution
statistics, including various methodological considerations in the conduct
of large-scale inquiries.

(2) Continue to develop definitions, digests of country experience,
technical papers on various methodological aspects of the proposed World
Census of Population, including the applications of sampling, and the
preparation of informational materials on tabulation methods, and activities
designed to assist in the training of national statisticians of countries
requesting assistance.

(3) Preparation of technical studies and draft recommendations for
censuses of housing.

(4) Studies designed to improve the accuracy of vital statistics including
experimental studies on methods of obtaining vital statistics in countries
where the conventional registration methods may not be applicable, and an
analysis of the methods and uses of population registers.

(5) Continue to work toward the improvement of comparability in external
trade statistics, especially trade-by-country statistics through consultations
and, if necessary, with the assistance of an expert group; to investigate
the statistical treatment of goods traded in free ports or zones.

(6) Prepare suggestions for statistical programmes on the characteristics
of business enterprises, including proposals for tabulations showing
important aspects of economic activity; examine the question of what
reporting unit, i.e. the enterprise or establishment, would be most suitable
for reporting different types of data.

(7) Investigate the changes and refinements needed in the International
Standard Industrial Classification.
(8) Examine national experience with the existing standards for basic industrial statistics and prepare any proposed revisions in definitions and concepts which may appear necessary.

(9) Continue to examine alternative methods of compiling index numbers of wholesale prices; develop suggestions for pricing highly fabricated goods and other problems of collection and examine methods for general purpose indexes of retail sales.

(10) Collect information on national experience in the compilation of statistics on capital formation and consider the elements of a programme for the collection of these statistics.

(11) Prepare a comprehensive report on methodology and problems connected with the development of price and quantity indexes, with the assistance of experts, if necessary.

(12) Collect information on methods used to prepare distributions of income by size or by socioeconomic groups.

(13) Prepare necessary amending proposals to the United Nations system of national accounts and investigate systems of accounts used by countries with centrally planned economies.

(14) Development of standards for the improvement of social statistics generally including statistics bearing on conditions (or levels) of living, co-operating with the specialized agencies towards this end.

7. Projects of Lower Priority

(1) Statistics of tourism.