

United Nations
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL

Nations Unies
CONSEIL
ECONOMIQUE
ET SOCIAL

UNRESTRICTED

E/CN.3/SR.17
29 August 1947

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

SECOND SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Friday, 29 August 1947, at 2:45 p.m.

Present:

Chairman:	Mr. H. Marshall	(Canada)
	Mr. G. Darmois	(France)
	Mr. P. J. Idenburg	(Netherlands)
	Mr. G. Jahn	(Norway)
	Mr. S. Inan	(Turkey)
	Mr. R. G. D. Allen	(United Kingdom)
	Mr. S. A. Rice	(United States)

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mr. R. M. Woodbury	(ILO)
Mr. A. Eckstein	(FAO)
Mr. A. M. Lester	(ICAO)
Mr. J. S. Gould and Mr. E. G. Goor	(BANK)
Mr. J. J. Polak	(FUND)

Non-Governmental Organizations having Consultative Status:

Mr. G. L. Ridgeway	(ICC)
Mr. L. Teper	(AFL)

Observers for Specialized Agencies:

Mr. K. Stowman	(WHO)
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Secretariat:

Mr. W. R. Leonard	(Representing the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Economic Affairs)
Mr. W. J. Bruce	(Secretary to Commission)
Mr. O. Schachter	(Legal Division)

Transfer to the United Nations of Functions and Powers Previously Exercised by the League of Nations under the International Convention Relating to Economic Statistics (1928) (E/CN.3/33)

The CHAIRMAN announced that the representative of the Legal Division was present and could advise the Commission regarding the procedures necessary to /effect the

effect the transfer of functions from the League of Nations Committee of Statistical Experts to the Statistical Commission of the United Nations. Advice was also sought on the legal effect of the deletion of the second paragraph of paragraph 2 of Article VIII of the Convention. Mr. Schachter informed the Commission that it was appropriate for the Statistical Commission to recommend the deletion or the revision of this paragraph and that such a deletion or revision could be accomplished in the same manner as the other amendments recommended to the Convention. He pointed out that if the Statistical Commission wished to assume the functions of the League of Nations Committee it would be necessary to amend the Convention as had been suggested in the Secretariat paper. This amended Convention, when signed by the contracting parties, would have the legal effect of creating a new Convention.

Mr. JAHN (Norway) pointed out that if the Commission failed to act there could be no transfer of functions of the League Committee under the Convention.

Mr. INAN (Turkey) thought that the purposes of the League's Committee of Statistical Experts were already embodied in the terms of reference of the Statistical Commission and therefore that no transfer was necessary.

Mr. JAHN (Norway) pointed out that all countries do not now have the statistics provided for in the Convention and that although the Statistical Commission might make suggestions to those countries, such suggestions would not be taken as seriously as they might if the obligations under the Convention could be called to the attention of the authorities responsible for developing national statistical systems. In this respect he believed that the work of the Statistical Commission would be materially strengthened should the Convention be amended and the responsibilities transferred to the United Nations. In reply to questions from the Commission Mr. Schachter pointed out that a safeguarding provision might be incorporated in the resolutions to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly to the effect that nothing in the Convention should be construed to limit the functions previously conferred upon the Statistical Commission of the United Nations.

Mr. WOODBURY (ILO) asked for clarification regarding the legal effect of the deletion of the paragraph upon the agreements negotiated between the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies.

Mr. SCHACHTER replied that it would have no legal effect upon the agreements.

The motion was made by Mr. Rice (United States) that the Commission reaffirm its action of the previous day accepting the draft protocol, annexes and resolutions proposed in document E/CN.3/33, with the addition of the amendment deleting the second paragraph of paragraph 2 of Article VIII, and,
/adding suitable

adding suitable language for a safeguarding clause in the resolutions to the Council and the General Assembly.

This motion was carried unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN read the draft resolution referring to the proposed 1950 Census of Agriculture which was accepted as follows:

THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

TAKING NOTE of the memorandum submitted by the FAO on the proposed World Census of Agriculture in 1950

ENDORSSES the objects of the Census and welcomes the steps taken to conduct co-operatively the Census in all parts of the world

REQUESTS the Economic and Social Council to invite all member nations to participate in the Census, stressing the urgency of member nations making early appropriations of funds and taking other steps to make the Census possible

REQUESTS the Statistical Office to arrange for the question of the use of sampling methods in a census of agriculture to be placed on the Agenda of the first session of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling.

The CHAIRMAN then read the resolution concerning document E/CN.3/28 which had been amended at the morning's meeting. This was accepted to read as follows:

"The Statistical Commission having received the interim report of the Secretary-General on the statistical activities of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies (E/CN.3/28), welcomes the progress thus far achieved through the Consultative Committee on Statistical Matters in recognizing the primary statistical responsibilities of specific specialized agencies in particular fields of subject-matter. It commends the Consultative Committee for the agreements reached respecting the standardization of such technical statistical practices as the selection of uniform base periods for the calculation and publication of index numbers. It notes with approval the arrangements made for the exchange of statistical questionnaires after issuance among the organizations represented in the Consultative Committee. The Commission believes, however, that although the exchange of such questionnaires for comment prior to issuance might in some cases be impracticable, this practice is generally desirable. It would increase the usefulness of the existing arrangement to all international organizations. It would assist greatly in the improvement of comparability of international statistics and in the avoidance of duplication in statistical requests to national governments.

/"The Commission

"The Commission therefore urges that the Secretary-General arrange for the Statistical Office to receive from all Specialized Agencies which are Members of the Consultative Committee on Statistical Matters, a draft of each statistical questionnaire prepared by any of them. Insofar as it is practicable, this should be done prior to the despatch of the questionnaire to national governments. The Statistical Office should circulate copies of draft statistical questionnaires received, and of any such questionnaires which organs of the United Nations intend to issue, to the Specialized Agencies interested in the subject-matter. The Statistical Office should finally assemble comments received and transmit them, together with its own comments, to the Agency originating the questionnaire.

"The Commission also recommends that the Secretary-General prepare and circulate to all agencies periodic reports on the current developments in the statistical activities of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies so that the agencies may be kept fully informed of the progress of international statistical programmes."

Report on the Plan for the Year Book of Demographic Statistics (E/CN.3/23, E/CN.9/7)

Mr. RICE (United States) pointed out that it would be desirable to discuss this item when the Population Commission's Report would be available as that Commission had spent much time and thought on the Secretariat memorandum E/CN.3/23. This was agreed.

Status of Programme and Arrangements for the World Statistical Congress (E/CN.3/34 and E/CN.3/WSC/1).

The CHAIRMAN called upon the Secretary to make a brief statement in elaboration of the Secretariat memorandum, after which the tentative programme of the World Statistical Congress was distributed (E/CN.3/WSC/1).

Mr. GOULD (Bank) requested a correction on page 2 of the programme changing the designation following his name. With no further comments or objections being heard, the Chairman declared the report of the Secretariat accepted.

Consideration of Proposals Dealing with Transport Statistics (E/CN.3/29)

The CHAIRMAN read the last four paragraphs of the memorandum prepared by the Secretariat, and opened the topic for discussion. Mr. WOODBURY (ILO) referred to the third paragraph of the Memorandum, which stated that the text of the resolution on inland transport statistics adopted by the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians would be made available to the Statistical Commission. He pointed out that the resolution could only be transmitted formally to the Commission after action by the Governing Body of
/the ILO.

the ILO. Since authorization had been given to make the resolution available at the World Statistical Congress, however, he considered that they might properly make it available to the Statistical Commission informally. He thereupon read the text of the resolution (document 6 ICLS/17). The CHAIRMAN expressed the thanks of the Commission and then called for further observation, indicating that the subject is quite large and in many respects highly technical. He suggested that the proposal for a committee of experts, mentioned in paragraph 6 (b) of the Secretariat Memorandum, might be worthy of consideration.

Mr. JAHN (Norway) pointed to the wide variations in the quality and availability of existing statistics on transport questions in different countries, and expressed the view that a thorough study should be made of the existing situation and also of what has been done by other organizations in this field. He pointed out that such study would require the services of experts in a number of fields, as questions of inland transport statistics are of an entirely different character from those, for example, of statistics of shipping. He suggested that the Secretariat should be urged to continue work in this field and that the Statistical Commission consider the questions at a later session after it has more information available.

The CHAIRMAN observed that the report of the Committee on Industrial Classification would deal with a number of questions germane to this topic and suggested that the Commission might wish to return to this discussion after that report is available.

Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) asked that consideration be given to paragraph 6 (b) of the Secretariat memorandum, saying that it was not altogether clear to him what was intended. In reply, Mr. LEONARD stated that the intent of this paragraph was intended to suggest a thorough study of existing statistics on transport questions in different countries with a view to appraising their comparability and determining what problems of comparability exist.

Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) then inquired as to the proper course of action with respect to collaboration with the Transport and Communications Commission in this matter. Mr. Leonard replied that on the basis of his discussion of the question with the Director of the Transport and Communications Division of the Secretariat, there appeared to be agreement that work on problems of transport statistics should centre in the Statistical Commission, and that it would be appropriate for the Statistical Commission to refer any action it might take on this subject to the Transport and Communications Commission to obtain the views of that Commission.

/The CHAIRMAN stated

The CHAIRMAN stated that it appeared to be the consensus of the Commission that the report of the Commission to the Economic and Social Council should include a recommendation on this matter, along the line suggested in paragraph 6 (b) of the Secretariat memorandum, and hearing no objection, he requested the Rapporteur to take appropriate action to this effect in preparing the draft report.

Consideration of Proposals Dealing with the Standardization of Statistical Methods E/CN.3/30.

The CHAIRMAN read the memorandum prepared by the Secretariat and called for discussion of the topics dealt with therein. Mr. WOODBURY (ILO) observed that the ILO has published studies dealing with family budget enquiries and plans further work in this field. He mentioned that the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians had adopted a resolution looking toward the further development of this work, and read the text of the resolution. He stated further that the Conference had also adopted a resolution dealing with cost of living indexes. He then asked whether the Statistical Commission would not wish to refer to the ILO the matter of consideration of these questions inasmuch as they pertain to labour topics.

Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) called attention to the urgency of work in this field and expressed the view that it should be undertaken soon. He stated that it was important that some work on this topic be undertaken promptly by the Statistical Office, giving consideration to what is being done elsewhere. He also expressed his concurrence with the proposal that the sampling aspects of this question be placed on the agenda of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling.

Mr. WOODBURY (ILO) suggested that the particular aim of work on the sampling aspects of this problem should be to bring to the attention of national governments the possibilities of the use of statistical sampling in this field.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada) agreed and said that his country has an organization for sampling which will be utilized in this connection.

Mr. JAHN (Norway) raised a question whether it was proposed that the Statistical Office should undertake work on family budgets as a means of developing weighting factors for use in construction of cost-of-living indexes.

Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) replied that that was in part the intention of the proposal.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether it was suggested that a resolution be drafted urging the Secretariat to undertake work on this problem. It was agreed that this should be done.

/Mr. ALLEN

Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) suggested that the resolution should provide for collaboration with ILO. He pointed out that these questions would be discussed further during consideration of the report of the Committee on Industrial Classification.

Mr. DARMOIS (France) referred briefly to the work which had been undertaken by France on family budget studies.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the task of drafting a resolution be left to the Rapporteur who would be asked to take into account also any subsequent discussions during consideration of the report of the Committee on Industrial Classification. This suggestion was agreed to.

Mr. TEPER (AFL) stated that in his view the request of the Statistical Commission had contemplated, in addition to the points covered by the Secretariat memorandum, that national governments should be encouraged to publish more information about methods of constructing index numbers. He referred to the efforts in this field recently undertaken by the United States Government.

The CHAIRMAN, hearing no objection, brought the discussion to a close and instructed the Rapporteur to include recommendations on this subject in the draft report.

The meeting rose at 4:45 p.m.
