

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

FOURTH SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Monday, 25 April 1949 at 10 a.m.

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N.B. Will delegates who wish to have corrections made to the Summary Record please submit such corrections in writing on the official notepaper of their delegation to the Secretariat, Room C-436, as soon as possible after distribution of the Summary Record.

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Present:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. MARSHALL	Canada
Later	Mr. IDENBURG	Netherlands
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. CAMPION	United Kingdom
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. DARMOIS	France
	Mr. JAHN	Norway
	Mr. RYABICHKO (Vice-Chairman)	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
	Mr. RYABUSHKIN	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mr. RICE	United States of America

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mr. WOODBURY	International Labour Organization
Mr. TOLLEY) Food and Agriculture Organization
Mr. CHOMBART de LAUWE	
Dr. PASCUA) World Health Organization
Mr. GRAB	

Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Mr. GOUDSWAARD	International Statistical Institute
Mr. OSSIPOW	Alliance Internationale de Tourisme/Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile

Secretariat:

Mr. LEONARD	Representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs
Mr. BRUCE	Secretary to the Commission

1. ADOPTION OF AGENDA (Item 1 of the Agenda), (Document E/CN.3/53/Rev.1)

The CHAIRMAN, declaring open the Fourth Session of the Commission, said that he intended to submit a memorandum on the implementation of the Commission's programme of work, including its financial implications, provided the Commission agreed to its inclusion in the agenda.

The Commission unanimously adopted the provisional agenda (Document E/CN.3/53/Rev.1) on the understanding that members might submit additional documents on matters relating to the Commission's work. It was also agreed that items need not necessarily be discussed in the order in which they appeared in the agenda.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 2 of the Agenda)

Mr. RICE (United States of America) said that during his long, cordial and productive association, as Rapporteur, with Mr. Marshall, he had come to regard him as an ideal chairman. However, at the Commission's third session, when its relations with regional statistical bodies had formed one of the principal subjects of discussion, it had become apparent that it was undesirable that both the Chairman and the Rapporteur should be drawn from the relatively restricted area, geographically speaking, of North America.

He therefore proposed for the office of Chairman Mr. Idenburg (Netherlands), who had played so conspicuous a part in statistical matters in Europe generally, and at the regional meeting of European statisticians in particular.

Mr. JAHN (Norway) seconded the proposal.

The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Idenburg (Netherlands) Chairman.

Mr. IDENBURG (Netherlands) took the chair.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) nominated Mr. Ryabichko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) for the office of Vice-Chairman. As the representative of a country of South Eastern Europe he would, with the Chairman, a representative of a country of Western Europe, be able to strengthen and maintain the balance of the Commission's relations with European statisticians.

Mr. RICE (United States of America) seconded the nomination.

The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Ryabichko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) Vice-Chairman.

On the proposal of Mr. JAHN (Norway), seconded by Mr. MARSHALL (Canada), the Commission unanimously elected Mr. Campion (United Kingdom) Rapporteur.

3. PROCEDURE

(a) ORDER OF DISCUSSION OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

On the proposal of Mr. JAHN (Norway), supported by Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the Commission agreed to defer discussion of Item 3 of the agenda, Report of Committee on Classification, until representatives had had time to study the report, which had been issued only on 22 April 1949.

At the suggestion of Mr. DARMOIS (France), supported by Mr. MARSHALL (Canada), the Commission agreed to defer discussion of Item 4 of the agenda, Report of Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling, second session, until Mr. Mahalanobis (India) arrived.

(b) DOCUMENTATION

Mr. RYABICHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), pointing out that only two of the documents to be considered at the session were as yet available in Russian, requested the Secretariat to remedy that defect;

he would be unable to take part effectively in the discussion of any item unless provided with Russian translations of the relevant documents.

Mr. BRUCE, Secretary to the Commission, replied that, mainly owing to pressure of work caused by the resumption of meetings of the General Assembly, the Secretariat had been able to prepare the documents only in the two working languages in which the Rules of Procedure required it to issue them. However, although he could give no assurance that the documents or parts thereof would be translated into Russian by any specific date, the Secretariat would do all it could to comply with the request of the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada) said that every effort should be made to provide Russian translations as quickly as possible.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) welcomed the suggestions and stated that if all the documents before the Commission could not be translated quickly, it would be very helpful if at least the most important of them, or the most important parts of lengthy documents, could be circulated in Russian at an early date.

4. CO-ORDINATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES - THIRD REPORT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL (Item 5 (a) of the Agenda) (Documents E/CN.3/69, E/CN.3/69, Annex 1 and E/CN.3/69, Annex 2).

Mr. LEONARD, representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, outlined the contents of the Third Report of the Secretary-General on Co-ordination of Statistical Activities (Document E/CN.3/69) and of the two Annexes thereto.

Mr. RICE (United States of America) said that the Report provided satisfactory and reassuring confirmation that the Secretariat was complying with the Commission's wishes concerning the co-ordination of international statistical activities. Were there in that connection any problems on which the Secretariat wished to solicit the advice of the Commission?

Mr. D'ARMOIS (France) considered that it would be useful for the Commission to hear the views of the Secretariat on existing gaps in the wide range of statistical subjects covered by international activities.

Mr. LEONARD, representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, stated that the arrangements made for collaboration between the Statistical Office of the United Nations and the Specialised Agencies had on the whole proved satisfactory. He would draw the attention of the Commission to paragraph 6 of Document E/CN.3/69, where reference was made to the necessity of a certain degree of flexibility within the general framework established by formal agreements. It was essential that the maintenance of such flexibility be ensured.

It was proposed to supplement the exchange of questionnaires by making arrangements for communicating to the Secretary-General information relating to the statistical plans of the Specialised Agencies in advance of the draft questionnaires.

The most important gap noted by the Statistical Office related to social statistics. Since the Secretariat had prepared a special document on that subject (Document E/CN.3/77), discussion on that point might appropriately be deferred until the Commission came to deal with Item 10 of the agenda, where specific reference was made to the improvement of social statistics.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada) asked if there were considerable duplication between the questionnaires issued by the Statistical Office and by Specialised Agencies.

Mr. LEONARD, representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, replied that, save for a few minor instances, no serious duplication occurred. The most difficult problem was that of relating the work of the Statistical Office and of the Specialised Agencies to the activities of the regional commissions. The latter

dealt with specific problems which sometimes necessitated the sudden issue and circulation of a questionnaire. In the majority of cases, however, it was rather a case of improving co-ordination than of eliminating duplication.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, said that since the documents listed under Item 5 of the Agenda dealt with co-ordination rather than with programmes, he would speak later on the latter point. No reference was made in the report on the co-ordination of Statistical Activities (Document E/CN.3/69) to the number of countries which answered the questionnaires, or to how, and with what degree of detail, questionnaires were answered. That question would arise with reference to Item 8 of the Agenda: Report on publication programme of the Statistical Office.

From the point of view of national statistical offices, elaborate machinery was required to check and revise the data asked for in the questionnaires. It was consequently essential that there should be some degree of certainty that good results were obtained by the use of questionnaires. Moreover, those questionnaires which were not sent out periodically, but on an ad hoc basis, for example (to test how much information was available on a certain subject) should be examined carefully to determine whether they were yielding satisfactory results.

Mr. TOLLEY (Food and Agriculture Organisation) said that from the point of view of the Food and Agriculture Organisation co-ordination in the field of statistics and publications was, thanks to the valuable work of the Statistical Office, wholly satisfactory. Collaboration had also been developed with such agencies as the International Labour Organisation and the International Monetary Fund, with which common problems were worked out jointly, to facilitate the work of national statisticians.

Mr. WOODBURY (International Labour Organisation) also expressed his satisfaction with the co-ordination achieved, giving as an example thereof,

the advice which the International Monetary Fund had sought from the International Labour Organisation on the problem of the collection and computation of cost of living index numbers. The International Labour Organisation had been able to give the International Monetary Fund the full benefit of its views on that problem.

In his opinion, difficulties chiefly arose with regional commissions which were insufficiently familiar with the general programmes and structure of the United Nations. For instance, the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Europe had sent out a questionnaire relating to points on which the International Labour Organisation was already collecting statistics. That, presumably, would not recur. He must however emphasize that the International Labour Organisation would always be ready to give regional commissions any information that it had.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, stated that, since it was desirable that the Commission should record its views on the co-ordination of statistical activities, he would propose that a resolution be drafted noting the Commission's approval of the existing arrangements for co-ordination, emphasizing the need for the greatest degree of flexibility in those arrangements, and suggesting that means be established whereby the plans of all agencies relating to the collection of statistical data might be communicated in advance to the Secretary-General.

Mr. RICE (United States of America) seconded the proposal of the representative of the United Kingdom.

On the proposal of the Soviet Union representative,
the Commission agreed to defer discussion of the proposal of the United Kingdom representative until the text of his resolution was available in written form.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.