

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

DRAFT REPORT OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION TO THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Statistical Commission held its first session during the period
27 January to February 1947 with the following members in attendance:

Mr. H. Marshall	member from	Canada
Mr. D. K. Lieu	" "	China
Mr. G. Darmon	" "	France
Mr. P. C. Mahalanobis	" "	India
Mr. P. J. Idenburg	" "	Netherlands
Mr. R. G. D. Allen	" "	United Kingdom
Mr. I. S. Malyshev	" "	USSR
Mr. S. A. Rice	" "	United States

2. Mr. J. Saenz of Mexico and Mr. G. Jahn of Norway were unable to attend
but were represented by observers

Mr. I. Ibarquen, and

Mr. E. Erichsen,

respectively. The members from Turkey and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist
Republic were not present.

3. The Specialized Agencies were represented at the Commission by:

Mr. C. Taeuber for the Food and Agricultural Organization,

Mr. E. J. Riches and

Mr. R. M. Woodbury for the International Labour Organization,

Mr. S. V. Arnaldo for the United Nations Educational Scientific
and Cultural Organization.

4. Observers in attendance were Mr. W. R. Gardner and Mr. E. Hicks for
the International Monetary Fund, Mr. A. M. Lester for the Provisional
International Civil Aviation Organization, Mr. Z. Deutschman for the
World Health Organization. Mr. L. Teper attended as observer for the

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American Federation of Labor.

Mr. W. J. Bruce was Secretary to the Commission.

5. The Commission elected the following members as its officers:

Mr. H. Marshall as Chairman, Mr. P. C. Mahalanobis as Vice-Chairman, and Mr. S. A. Rice as Rapporteur. The Commission elected Mr. S. A. Rice as its Representative on the Population Commission.

6. The Commission adopted its Provisional Rules of Procedure and referred suggested amendments to the Secretariat with instructions to present the amended rules to its second session for adoption.

CHAPTER II

SUB-COMMISSION ON STATISTICAL SAMPLING

7. In accordance with the authorization given to it by the Economic and Social Council [E/76/Rev.1] the Commission established a Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling and requested the Secretary-General to invite the following to serve as members:

8. Mr. P. C. Mahalanobis, of India, to serve as Chairman, Mr. G. Darmais, of France, Mr. W. E. Deming of the United States, Mr. F. Yates, of the United Kingdom, and a member from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to be designated.

9. It is recommended that the Secretary-General should ask Mr. R. A. Fisher whether he would be willing to serve as consultant to the Sub-Commission.

10. The Statistical Commission,

Directs the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling:

(a) to draft recommendations to the Commission concerning its detailed terms of reference and composition in conformity with Chapter VIII of the Report of the Nucleus Commission [E/32];

(b) to examine the status of the methods used in applications of statistical sampling in different countries and in different fields of subject matter;

(c) to give special consideration to the use of statistical sampling methods in meeting the actual operating needs of the United Nations and

/the Specialized

the Specialized Agencies with a view to filling gaps in the information required by them, and to assessing the adequacy and precision of information obtained by a complete enumeration compared with information obtained by sampling methods.

CHAPTER III

TRANSFER OF LEAGUE OF NATIONS STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

11. In order to liquidate the League of Nations Committee of Statistical Experts and to promote continuity of its activities, the Statistical Commission wishes to assume the functions previously performed by the Committee of Statistical Experts set up under the International Convention Relating to Economic Statistics (1928). The Commission is advised that this is not possible unless and until the United Nations legally assumes the responsibilities entrusted to the League of Nations under the International Convention. The Commission therefore asks the Secretary-General to prepare a draft of a protocol amending the Convention and to submit the draft for consideration by the Commission at its next session.

12. This procedure would permit the draft protocol to be considered in detail by the Commission prior to submitting an explicit recommendation with the draft to the Economic and Social Council in 1947.

13. Because the Commission wishes the unpublished technical papers prepared under the direction of the League of Nations Committee of Statistical Experts to be made available to specialists, it requests the Secretary-General to arrange for the publication of the following three reports and related documents:

- (a) Measurement of National Income and the Construction of Social Accounts,
- (b) Banking Statistics, Recommendations on Scope and Principles of Classification,
- (c) Note on Balance of Payments Statistics.

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Such publication should be under the imprint of the League of Nations as the last in the series "Studies and Reports on Statistical Methods". The Commission wishes it to be understood that these reports are regarded by it as having important value as technical documents but do not carry its endorsement in detail. The Commission moreover wishes to assert its continuing interest in developing statistical methodology in these and other subjects.

14. The Statistical Commission requests the Secretary-General in consultation with the appropriate Specialized Agencies to take into account any comments received, or to be received from Governments, on the reports cited above in connection with work undertaken in the fields to which these reports relate.

15. The Commission notes with approval that the Statistical Office of the United Nations completed arrangements for the publication of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics at United Nations headquarters in New York beginning with the January 1947 issue. The proposal to prepare a Supplement to the Bulletin, describing in detail the statistical series from the various countries contained in the Bulletin, has the full approval of the Statistical Commission. It is recommended that a revised edition of this Supplement be issued periodically.

16. The Commission notes that further details of the publication programme of the Statistical Office, including those for the Statistical Yearbook, will be reported at its second session.

CHAPTER IV

CO-ORDINATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

17. The Statistical Commission, taking note that it has been charged with the task of assisting the Economic and Social Council in the co-ordination of the statistical work of Specialized Agencies and in advising the organs of

/the United Nations

the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, interpretation and dissemination of statistical information,

RECOMMENDS

That the Council request the Secretary-General to make periodic reports at sessions of the Statistical Commission on progress achieved in developing administrative instruments, procedures, and agreements through which effective statistical co-operation may be secured between the United Nations and the agencies brought into relationship with it through formal agreements and otherwise. The initial report should be made at the second session of the Statistical Commission and should include the following items:

- (a) A comprehensive inventory of the statistical activities and requirements of all the constituent organs of the United Nations, and of the Specialized Agencies;
- (b) The extent to which complete or partial duplication may exist among these activities and requirements;
- (c) The proposed allocation of primary responsibilities for the collection and publication of statistics in various specialized fields among the Specialized Agencies and the Statistical Office of the United Nations, taking into account the agreements reached between the Specialized Agencies and the United Nations;
- (d) Steps taken to co-ordinate the collection and publication of such statistics together with proposed methods of achieving further co-ordination;
- (e) Proposals to arrange for the collection and publication of statistical data required for international purposes which may not already be adequately provided through the statistical activities of the United Nations or the Specialized Agencies;

/(f) The extent

(f) The extent to which the objectives of the agreements existing between the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies with respect to statistical services have been realized. The report should point out the difficulties, if any, which have been encountered in carrying out the agreements and the means which should be undertaken to remove such difficulties.

18. It is recognized that there is immediate need for developing standards of reporting data in the field of balance of payments, and that this matter is of concern not only to the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the Specialized Agencies, but also to the Governments which will be asked to supply data. The Statistical Commission therefore requests the Statistical Office of the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund and other interested agencies to collaborate closely in developing standards in this field. The Secretary-General should include a special section dealing with this topic in his report to the Commission at its next session.

CHAPTER V

RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL ORGANIZATIONS

19. The Statistical Commission expressed the view:

(a) that the United Nations and Specialized Agencies have responsibilities for the collection, analysis, and publication of statistics required in the performance of their assigned tasks and for the general development and improvement of an adequate and co-ordinated international statistical system;

(b) that non-governmental international organizations concerned with statistics should maintain and develop their scientific and professional character and should direct their activities toward the development of statistical methodology and scientific standards, the interchange and diffusion of knowledge, the

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training of statisticians, and the maintenance of high professional competence.

20. It therefore recommends:

(a) that the Council admit to consultative status non-governmental international statistical organizations that so request and are prepared to relate their activities to those of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies in the manner described in paragraphs 19 (a) and (b) above;

(b) that the Council request that the Secretary-General in his discussions with such non-governmental international statistical organizations be guided by the definitions of roles stated in the preceding paragraphs with a view to eliminating any undesirable duplication in programmes and activities and to assuming responsibility for such activities as might more appropriately be taken by the United Nations;

(c) that the Council request the Secretary-General to report periodically to the Statistical Commission upon the discussions and negotiations which he has conducted in accordance with paragraph 20 (b).

CHAPTER VI

PROPOSED 1950 CENSUS OF THE AMERICAS

THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

21. TAKING NOTE of statements made by the representatives of the Committee of the 1950 Census of the Americas; namely,

(a) That a 1950 Census of the Americas is proposed as a co-operative project of the appropriate statistical offices of the American nations.

(b) That a Committee on the 1950 Census of the Americas has been established to reach agreement on minimum standards and

/definitions

definitions, to survey methods and procedures and to approve schedules, forms and instructions to be used by each of the co-operating nations in taking its own census.

(c) That the Committee on the 1950 Census of the Americas has agreed to circulate copies of approved schedules, forms and instructions to all Member Nations of the United Nations for their information.

22. RECOMMENDS

That the Economic and Social Council record:

(a) its welcome of the steps which are being taken to conduct co-operatively censuses of American nations, and

(b) its belief that the experience gained in the preparation and conduct of this co-operative project will be of great value to Member Governments in their own countries, and that it will be a useful guide in possible later projects on a world-wide scale, and

(c) request that Member Governments taking part in the 1950 Census of the Americas should keep the Secretary-General and the Statistical Commission informed as to the development of the project.

CHAPTER VII

PROPOSED WORLD STATISTICAL CONGRESS OF 1947

23. The Statistical Commission having been asked to advise the Economic and Social Council on:

(a) the desirability of promoting a World Statistical Congress;

(b) the practicability of holding such a Congress in the United States in September 1947 under the aegis of the Economic and Social Council; and

/(c) the degree

(c) the degree of sponsorship which they feel the United Nations should take in promoting such a Congress;

desires to bring to the attention of the Economic and Social Council the views it has expressed to the Secretary-General.

24. That a World Statistical Congress under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council would greatly benefit the United Nations by the opportunity afforded the members of the Statistical Commission as well as the Statistical staff of the Secretariat and the Specialized Agencies;

(a) to ascertain at first hand the statistical problems - both general and specific - which a world-wide representative assembly of statisticians would wish the Statistical Commission and the Statistical Office of the United Nations to consider during the next few years,

(b) to explain to the statisticians of the various countries, including countries not now represented on the Commission, the programme of work on which the Statistical Commission, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, and the Specialized Agencies are at present engaged or are contemplating, and

(c) to explain and develop the means by which the Statistical activities of the Specialized Agencies, quasi-governmental, and non-governmental organizations might be related to each other and to those of the United Nations in fostering international co-operation in the improvement of statistics.

25. That in view of the meetings of the International Statistical Institute, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, the Econometric Society, and a group interested in organizing an International Income Conference, scheduled to be held in Washington, D.C., during the period 6 - 18 September 1947, it would be desirable for the Economic and Social Council to assume responsibility for a limited programme of general meetings under its auspices, to be known as the World Statistical Congress,

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focusing attention upon the statistical activities of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies. The arrangements for such general meetings should be co-ordinated with those of the international organization which are scheduled to meet during the same period.

26. That the Economic and Social Council should request the Secretary-General to appoint a representative to serve on an International Arrangements Committee. This Committee should consist of representatives of the organizations involved and will be responsible for the co-ordination of all programmes and arrangements of the related sessions.

28. That the Economic and Social Council should invite the attention of Members of the United Nations to the World Statistical Congress, and should invite them to participate by sending delegations of leading statisticians in their respective countries.

29. That the Economic and Social Council should also invite the attention of the Specialized Agencies to the World Statistical Congress and should invite them to participate by sending officials responsible for their statistical activities, and by arranging at the time of the Congress such meetings of their statistical advisory bodies as may be feasible.

30. That the Economic and Social Council should request the Secretary-General to arrange for the participation of appropriate officials of the United Nations in the World Statistical Congress and to take such other action as he may consider necessary and appropriate in connection with the arrangements for the Congress.

Chapter VIII

Future Work of the Commission

30. The Statistical Commission recognizes the need for taking steps to make statistics compiled by different countries more comparable. Perhaps in no field of statistics is comparability so urgently needed as in analyzing the character of economic activity in different countries.

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During recent years a number of countries have considered revising their classifications of industries and of branches of economic activity. The Statistical Commission is of the opinion that the question of securing, so far as possible, comparability in the statistics of different countries with regard to what is generally called "industrial classification" - classification of branches of economic activity - should receive urgent consideration.

31. It is recommended therefore:

(a) that the Secretary-General obtain from Governments copies of their industrial classification, covering all branches of economic activity, now in use or under consideration by them, together with any explanatory notes which may be available and that this information be collated;

(b) that report on the data received be submitted to a Committee of the Statistical Commission in order that it may:

(i) plan and consider a future programme of work in this field, and

(ii) report on the subject at the next session of the
Statistical Commission;

(c) that the Economic and Social Council authorize the Statistical Commission to appoint a Committee of Experts, at a date to be specified by the Commission. This Committee shall consist of not more than seven members to serve in their individual capacities and to make proposals to the Statistical Commission on a standard industrial classification.

32. The Statistical Commission recommends that work on statistics of national income should be pursued as expeditiously as possible by the Statistical Office of the United Nations in consultation with the interested Specialized Agencies. The Commission believes that publication

/of these data

of these data should be undertaken as soon as possible in order to provide comparable figures on national income and expenditure for as many countries as possible. These estimates of national income should cover studies in "social accounts" and it is recommended that the Statistical Office of the United Nations undertake a preliminary survey of estimates of national wealth.

33. The Commission has requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations that in preparing the Agenda for its next session memoranda should be submitted on the following subjects:

- (a) unification of transport statistics;
- (b) methods of compilation of index numbers;
- (c) methods of achieving uniformity of basic economic statistical series.

34. Additional items for the future work programme of the Statistical Commission will be based on problems arising from the inventory of the statistical requirements and activities of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies requested by the Commission in Chapter IV of this report. In addition, the Statistical Office of the United Nations will refer to the Commission, problems of non-comparability and lack of standardization of data collected for the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.