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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION (27 February - 3 March 1995)

1. The Statistical Commission held its twenty-eighth session at United Nations Headquarters from 27 February to 3 March 1995. It considered five main issues: (a) the work of inter-agency task forces in eight areas, namely national accounts, industrial and construction statistics, international trade statistics, finance statistics, price statistics, service statistics, environment statistics and the measurement of poverty; (b) demographic, social and migration statistics, including preparations for the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme; (c) critical problems in economic statistics; (d) the development of economic classifications; and (e) technical cooperation in statistics. The Commission also held a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of international statistical work within the United Nations system.
2. The Commission gave specific guidance to each of the task forces on their areas and priorities for work. This included: (a) emphasizing the importance of implementing the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) and requesting a strategy paper defining criteria against which progress could be judged; (b) restating the key role that the regional commissions had to play in promoting and monitoring such implementation; (c) advising on steps to facilitate implementation of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, in countries; (d) requesting a revision of the United Nations International Recommendations for Construction Statistics; (e) agreeing on the cessation of work at the international level on trying to adjust nationally reported international trade data to improve international comparability; (f) endorsing a plan of action and outline to revise the United Nations International Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions along with a compiler's manual; and (g) deciding that the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3, should not be revised.
3. The Commission also: (a) requested the Task Force on Price Statistics to carry out the fact-finding activities envisaged in its mandate and focus on those aspects of the consumer price index harmonization issue that were manageable within the given time-frame and resources; (b) endorsed the holding of a workshop by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on service statistics in the domestic sector; (c) endorsed the plan to obtain an inventory of available data on trade in services as a first step towards data development in this area; (d) approved a programme of international compilation of environmental indicators from national statistical services based on a core set of indicators; (e) requested the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination to consider what further work, if any, should be undertaken in the field of poverty measurement; and (f) asked that the global statistical system be prepared to respond effectively to the requirements for statistics on social issues emerging from the World Summit for Social Development.

4. In the demographic, social and migration fields, the Commission: (a) endorsed the continued implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems, the revision of the United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and the completion of the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics in time for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in June 1996; (b) welcomed the issuance of the second edition of The World's Women: Trends and Statistics for the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995; (c) requested that a draft classification of time-use activities be prepared by the Statistical Division; (d) agreed on the importance of further development of impairment, disability and handicap (IDH) statistics and requested the Statistical Division to prepare a minimum set of IDH statistics-related tabulation items and core tables. The Commission also endorsed the proposed preparations for the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme, including the necessary handbooks and training materials, and recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on the Programme.

5. The Commission added an additional topical issue to its agenda entitled "Critical problems in economic statistics". These included problems with the production and dissemination of timely, relevant and accurate economic indicators, their interpretation and use, and public perception of their accuracy. Dealing with these problems was considered crucial to the continued integrity of statistics, and the Commission requested that studies be carried out by several international organizations and countries.

6. The Commission endorsed a strategic plan for the development of economic classifications and a specific plan for the revision of the provisional Central Product Classification through the work of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics.

7. After reviewing the situation of technical cooperation in statistics, the Commission requested an analytical report on the overall funding situation, priorities and allocation of funds, and an analysis of the impact of the new agency support cost arrangements at the country level.

8. For the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of international statistical work in the United Nations system, the Commission heard commemorative statements from Mr. W. Seltzer, former Director of the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and from the current Chairman of the Commission.

9. The Commission endorsed the proposed work programme and priorities, the proposed medium-term plan perspective of the Statistical Division and the work on the United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS), and stressed the importance of completing UNESIS.
