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STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
Sixth Session

TRANSPORT STATISTICS  
Note by the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. Since the last meetings of the Transport and Communications Commission and the Statistical Commission the work of the United Nations in transport statistics has progressed in three principal directions

- (a) Towards standardizing the definitions of the most important series
- (b) Towards obtaining statistics for the transport of goods by road motor vehicle.
- (c) Towards improving the coverage and usefulness of the transport statistical series published by the United Nations.

A. INTERNATIONAL STANDARD DEFINITIONS FOR TRANSPORT STATISTICS

2. Resolution 7 of the fourth session of the Transport and Communications Commission (E/1665) and a resolution of the fifth session of the Statistical Commission (E/1696, paragraph 54) refer to the standardization of transport statistics. The progress indicated by these resolutions was noted by the eleventh session of the Economic and Social Council in resolution 299 (XI) C. Accordingly, the Statistical Office revised its paper entitled "Transport Statistics" (E/CN.2/75 - E/CN.3/85) taking into account the suggestions of the Commissions. The revised document was reproduced in English, French and Spanish as Statistical Paper Series M, Number 8 with the title "International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics". The resolutions of the Commissions are quoted in paragraphs 6 and 7 of that paper. The paper was sent in August 1950 to the governments and bodies concerned with the request

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that they should follow the suggestion of the Commissions and examine the possibility of producing, for purposes of international comparability, series in substantial agreement with those set forth in the document. The experience of governments in making this examination is to be used by the Secretary-General in order to propose to the Commissions at subsequent sessions changes in the definitions where necessary.

3. The examination of "International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics" by governments is in progress. Comments which have been so far received indicate that the definitions are in general acceptable to governments. Several governments have asked for additional copies so that their departments may make a thorough study of the definitions. During the summer the officers in charge of transport statistics in the Canadian and United States governments arranged to meet at Lake Success. They were of opinion that they could produce figures in substantial agreement with the "Definitions" and agreed to investigate the co-ordination of the two countries' statistics, where they impinge on one another, in the way recommended in the definitions. The chief statistician of the United Kingdom Ministry of Transport visited the Statistical Office in September and suggested a few amendments to the definitions.

4. The Statistical Office has been informed that "International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics" has been or is to be examined by two regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council: the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and the following international bodies:

- (a) Technical bodies of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- (b) The International Union of Railways (UIC)
- (c) The VIIth Pan American Railway Congress
- (d) The Secretariat of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine
- (e) The International Road Federation
- (f) The International Road Transport Union
- (g) Lloyd's Register of Shipping
- (h) Det Norske Veritas
- (i) The International Air Transport Association

/Those bodies

Those bodies which have expressed themselves are in general agreement with the definitions. A few details of the action taken by some of them appear below.

5. The Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Inland Transport of ECAFE which met from 24 October to 9 November had before it a document prepared jointly by the ECAFE Secretariat and the Statistical Office on the basis of the "Definitions". It was generally agreed that the statistics required could be supplied without difficulty. The meeting passed the following resolution (E/CN.11/262 resolution 22).

"THE AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON INLAND TRANSPORT

NOTING the work already undertaken as regards the collection and analysis of transport statistics by the Secretariat and the Statistical Office of the United Nations and the consequent necessity for avoiding any overlapping or duplication of work in this respect;

RECOMMENDS that the Executive Secretary maintain close liaison with the Statistical Office as regards both publication and use of the statistical series collected by the Statistical Office;

RECOMMENDS that the work of the Secretariat should be limited to specific, well defined objectives having direct bearing on the projects being studied in the field of inland transport;

RECOMMENDS that the Executive Secretary arrange to obtain from the Statistical Office or collect from governments as may be appropriate the available transport statistics required in planning action in the transport field through or by the Commission, and in evaluating the results of such action;

RECOMMENDS that, with a view to achieving maximum comparability in inter-railway statistics, the Executive Secretary in consultation with the United Nations Headquarters Secretariat invite the view of railway administrations concerned as to the feasibility of uniform adoption of international standard definitions."

6. The Working Party of Experts on Statistical Information of ECE at its fourth session in November 1950, carefully reviewed Chapter I Section A and Chapter II Section A of the "Definitions" and intends to examine the rest of the document at a later meeting. The Working Party made suggestions of two kinds:

/(a) suggestions

(a) suggestions for minor changes in the definitions (these will be communicated to the Statistical Office for consideration when the "Definitions" are revised);

(b) suggestions for the decomposition of some of the series into components of interest to ECE. (The Statistical Office considers that such decomposition when desired by Regional Commissions might well be initiated by them without reference to the Transport and Communications or Statistical Commission).

7. The International Union of Railways plans to submit the "Definitions" to its Sub-Commission on Statistics for information.

8. The VIIth Pan American Railway Congress held at Mexico City in October 1950 examined the "Definitions" and passed unanimously a resolution commending the document "International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics" and requesting its members to submit each month to the Permanent Commission of the Pan-American Railway Congress Association figures on the railway series recommended in "International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics" as the most fundamental. At an earlier Congress it had been decided to use in Latin America the definitions of the U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission. These are, however, in substantial agreement with those in "International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics".

9. The Secretariat of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine took a most helpful interest in the definitions. Its suggestions have been incorporated in the document.

10. The number of changes to the "Definitions" which have so far been suggested is quite small, so the Statistical Office recommends that a first revision be postponed until more governments have reported the results of detailed investigation.

#### B. THE TRANSPORT OF GOODS BY ROAD MOTOR VEHICLE

11. The ECE has drawn attention to the importance of securing data on road traffic. The Inland Transport Committee of ECE at its fourth session -

##### "Noting

(a) the increased importance of road transport in Europe,

(b) the almost complete lack of statistics relating to this form of transport particularly in respect of the volume of freight traffic, and

(c) the fact that the absence of road statistics renders it increasingly difficult to obtain any knowledge either of the total volume of transport as a whole or of the manner or direction in which transport is developing;

/Invited

Invited Governments ... to forward their views as to what may be considered the best methods of collecting the information necessary for the compilation of road traffic estimates, with particular reference to spot checks and samplings, giving as much information as possible on past experience in this field". (E/ECE/TRANS/166, resolution No. 64).

12. This matter has been discussed by the working bodies of the Inland Transport Committee; as a result the Transport Division of the ECE co-operated with the Statistical Office in bringing the question of the use of sampling to measure goods traffic by road before the Sub-Commission on Sampling of the Statistical Commission at its fourth session in September 1950. The Sub-Commission prepared a technical document suggesting a method of sampling to measure the goods traffic carried by road motor vehicles (E/CN.3/114, Annex II), and made the recommendation quoted below (E/CN.3/114 paragraph 51) -

"The Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling notes the desire of the Governments of many countries to obtain figures for road-motor-vehicle transport comparable to those which are available for railways, inland waterways and air transport. The Sub-Commission therefore requests the Secretary-General:

"(i) To recommend to interested Governments that they undertake in 1951 experimental sample surveys to obtain, during some conveniently chosen period such as a month, for road-motor-vehicle goods traffic the following total figures:

- (a) Vehicle-kilometres, loaded and empty separately;
- (b) Capacity in ton-kilometres on the basis of kilometres actually run;
- (c) Tonnage of goods loaded;
- (d) Freight ton-kilometres.

(ii) To draw to the attention of the Governments the technical suggestions for making such surveys which are contained in Annex II to this report and to ask governments to communicate to him their experience in conducting such experimental surveys for consideration by the Sub-Commission.

(iii) To provide, within the limits of his resources, advice on the details of sampling technique when asked to do so by a Government

/conducting

conducting an experimental survey of the sort recommended by the Sub-Commission.

13. The novel feature of the technical suggestions made by the Sub-Commission is the suggestion that a sample of carriers be obtained, not by the use of a list of carriers (such lists being difficult or impossible to obtain in most countries), but by means of a sample of lorries chosen from the official register of vehicles.

14. The Report of the Sub-Commission was forwarded to all member governments and in addition the Statistical Office has drawn the recommendation of the Sub-Commission to the attention of the principal statistical officers of the countries outside Europe which, it was thought, might be interested in considering a sample survey of the kind in question.

15. With respect to Europe, since ECE initiated the study, it has been arranged that the Transport Division of ECE will discuss with European Governments the question of implementing in Europe the recommendation of the Sub-Commission. The matter was discussed at the fourth session (in December) of the Working Party on Statistical Information of ECE. After unanimously expressing its appreciation for the valuable contribution to the development of road transport statistics made by the Sub-Commission, the Working Party -

"invited the Executive Secretary, when communicating with European governments in respect of point (111) of the Sub-Commission's request to the Secretary-General, to ask them to inform him of the exact nature of the advice they may require on sampling technique and practice and also to state whether the impacting of such assistance to countries individually should be preceded by a joint meeting of sampling experts and of European officials who would be primarily concerned in the actual sampling investigations in their respective countries. In the light of the replies received from Governments, the Executive Secretary would consult with the Chairman of the Working Party and the Statistical Office of the United Nations with a view to determining the most desirable course of action". (W/TRANS/WP.6/30).

#### C. STATISTICAL SERIES PUBLISHED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

16. The Statistical Office publishes transport statistical series in the United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and in the United Nations Statistical Yearbook. Since the last sessions of the Commissions, series on

/tonnage of

tonnage of goods loaded and unloaded in coastwise traffic have been added to the former and series on tonnage of goods loaded and unloaded in international sea-borne traffic have been added to the latter. Figures for the freight net ton-kilometres carried by railroads in the whole world in the years 1928-1937 and 1946-1949 have been published and for the same years, figures for the total tonnage of goods loaded in the world in international sea-borne traffic.

17. The ECAFE has published in "Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East 1949" transport statistical tables prepared in collaboration with the Statistical Office,

18. The ECE publishes a "Quarterly Bulletin of European Inland Transport Statistics" in mimeographed form and annually an "Annual Bulletin of Transport Statistics" in printed form containing also a survey entitled "The Transport Situation in Europe". The ECE Working Party on Statistical Information has recommended that European Governments furnish the ECE Secretariat with detailed information about the International movement of goods.

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