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STATISTICAL COMMISSION

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON STATISTICS  
OF NATIONAL INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

(Memorandum Prepared by the Secretariat for Consideration  
Under Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda of the Statistical  
Commission)

1. The Economic and Social Council in a resolution adopted on 29 March 1947, in accordance with a recommendation of the Statistical Commission, requested the Secretary-General to pursue as expeditiously as possible work on statistics of national income and national expenditure with a view to preparing such data for publication at an early date in order to provide comparable data in this field (E/409, 9 April 1947).

I. SURVEY OF WORK IN PROGRESS

2. In accordance with this resolution, the Statistical Office addressed requests to all Member countries asking that recent national income data and other relevant material be made available for the purposes of such a study. Up to the present time replies have been received from:

Australia	*Luxembourg
Belgium	Netherlands
Brazil	New Zealand
Canada	Norway
Chile	Paraguay
China	Peru
Czechoslovakia	Philippines
Denmark	El Salvador
Dominican Republic	Sweden
*Egypt	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
France	United Kingdom
Greece	United States
*Guatemala	*Venezuela
India	Yugoslavia
*Lebanon	

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Those countries designated by an asterisk stated that the required information could not be submitted at this time inasmuch as recent national income data were still unavailable. In addition, the Statistical Office also wrote to certain non-Member countries with a view to making its inquiry as broad as possible. The following non-Member countries have responded:

\*Austria  
Bulgaria  
\*Finland  
Hungary  
Ireland  
Switzerland

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Of this group, those countries designated by an asterisk were unable to furnish the information requested.

3. On the basis of these replies and with the assistance of material available in various official and unofficial publications, the Statistical Office has assembled national income data for about thirty countries.

Where recent figures were unavailable, no attempt has been made to supply up-to-date estimates by extra-polation or other means.

4. For about twenty-five countries sufficient information and data were available to enable detailed analyses of concepts and methods to be undertaken. This step was necessary not only in order to evaluate the various estimates of national income and expenditure, but also to reach decisions on the adjustments necessary to achieve international comparability.

5. As a basis for international comparisons, the Statistical Office has adopted, with slight modifications, the definitions and methods recommended in the League of Nations report Measurement of National Income and the Construction of Social Accounts (including the appended Memorandum).

Without this detailed and comprehensive report, the Statistical Office would not have been able to carry out so promptly the Commission's recommendations.

6. With the standards proposed by this report as a basis for arriving at international comparisons, the Statistical Office has made the required adjustments for those national income estimates for which sufficient supporting information was available. Such adjustments have been made on the estimates for twenty countries. Inasmuch as a great deal of the data required for making the adjustments was unavailable in published form, the Statistical Office plans to request this additional information from those countries whose estimates could not at this stage be brought into line with the standards adopted for arriving at international comparisons.

7. Data on real national income have been assembled in order to present a survey of changes in real income over time for some fifteen countries for which data are available. Attention has been given to methods of deflation and related techniques used to arrive at these figures, and comments on these methods have been prepared.

8. The Statistical Office has also assembled and studied the systems of social accounts being utilized by a number of countries in connection with the preparation of statistics of national income and related aggregates.

## II. PLANS FOR A NATIONAL INCOME PUBLICATION

9. The Statistical Office is now engaged in preparing a report for publication dealing with national income statistics. It is planned to  
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include in this report chapters on the following subjects:

- (a) The various definitions of national income, their implications, and the relationships between the various income aggregates in general use.
- (b) Tables of national income breakdowns and totals, beginning with 1938 whenever possible, together with a discussion of the definitions and methods used, for each of approximately twenty-five countries. The data and discussion for each country will occupy a separate section, but the arrangement of the tables and the accompanying textual material in each section will be on as uniform a basis as the nature of the material permits.
- (c) Tables of comparable national income data indicating the adjustments that have been or should be made in each case in order to bring the original estimates into conformity with the standards adopted for international comparisons.
- (d) Tables of national income at constant prices for those countries publishing such data, together with a general discussion of the measurement of real national income.
- (e) Tables presenting the social accounts of those countries making use of a system of accounts, together with a general discussion of the theory of systems of social accounts.
- (f) A synoptic table giving total national income data for each of approximately thirty countries from 1929 to the present time.
- (g) A national income bibliography listing important sources of data for as many countries as possible and leading books and articles dealing with the subject of national income and related topics.

### III. PLANS FOR FUTURE WORK

10. The Statistical Office expects to prepare annually a survey of national income statistics of which the report now in progress will be the first number. It is hoped that future issues will include chapters dealing with estimates of national wealth and international comparisons of real income. It is also planned to expand the geographical coverage and to present more up-to-date information. Particular efforts will be made to expand the chapter dealing with comparable estimates of national income.

11. Among the immediate objectives is that of drafting recommendations for the compilation and presentation of uniform national income statistics. At the present time, adjustments of data can usually lead only to comparability among total figures. Before international comparisons of

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the separate items of the various breakdowns are feasible (e.g. the share going to labour or capital, the net output of government or particular industries, consumers' expenditures, etc.), uniform and strictly defined classifications will have to be adopted.

12. The Statistical Office wishes to place itself at the disposal of Member countries in need of expert assistance in the field of national income. This assistance can take the form, within the limits of the resources of the Statistical Office, of the rendering of technical advice or the loan of technical personnel under arrangements conforming to general policies on the provision of expert assistance. In view of the fact that many Governments are now revising their methods and procedures in this field, the Secretariat can play an important role in insuring that the new estimates are compiled with a view to international comparability.

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