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MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTEENTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION

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The fifteenth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission was held at United Nations Headquarters from 26 February to 8 March 1968. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1147 (XLI), effective 1 January 1967 the Commission was enlarged to twenty-four members, elected on the basis of an equitable geographical distribution according to a specified pattern which includes five members from African States. In 1968, the five African States on the Commission were Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic. The Director of the Research and Statistics Division of ECA participated as part of the Secretariat.

The substantive part of the Commission's report (E/4471) is divided into the following chapters: national accounts and balances (paras. 8-43); classification of kind of economic activity (paras. 44-57); balance-of-payments statistics (paras. 58-61); industrial statistics (paras. 62-91); international work programme and co-ordination (paras. 92-108); external trade statistics (paras. 109-128); demographic and housing statistics (paras. 129-146); population (paras. 147-149); international travel statistics (paras. 150-154); statistics of research and development (paras. 155-157). While the various deliberations of the Commission are believed to be of interest to the Conference of African Statisticians, this document is designed to highlight those aspects of the discussions which are of special relevance to the Conference.

In resolution 1 (XV), the Commission requested, inter alia, preparation and publication of a comprehensive description of the revised System of National Accounts (SNA) (this has been issued as Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 2, Rev. 3); the designing of questionnaires for gathering comparable data based on the revised SNA for countries using that system and based on the System of Material Product Balances (MPS) for countries using that system; preparation, in co-operation with IMF, of draft detailed definitions, classifications and standard accounts and tables in respect of the balance-sheet and revaluation accounts of the new SNA; preparation of technical manuals in respect of various aspects of the revised SNA; and formulation of draft guidelines in respect of a system of price and quantity statistics within the framework of the national accounts and balances. Draft questionnaires for gathering national accounting data based on the new SNA and MPS are presented in documents ST/STAT/38 and ST/STAT/39, respectively; these documents have been circulated to the appropriate national statistical authorities for comment.

The adaptation of the full SNA to the requirements and circumstances of the developing countries was considered by the Commission to furnish suitable goals for the gradual evolution of national accounts and

co-ordinated bodies of basic statistics in these countries. The suggested special classifications and accounts and tables will yield urgently needed data for purposes of planning and assessing economic and social development.

The Commission felt that considerable time would be needed for the developing countries to evolve the reliable series of basic data required for purposes of compiling an adequate set of national accounts. It was emphasized that the order of priority in which the series are developed should reflect the national requirements and circumstances of these countries.

The Commission recommended that workshops and seminars should be convened for the developing countries on the new SNA and the associated bodies of basic statistics. In this connection, ECA convened a Working Group on Statistics of Prices and Quanta and has included other meetings in respect of national accounting and related subjects in its work programme. The Statistical Office of the United Nations hopes to convene an inter-regional seminar in 1970 on methods of gathering and compiling national accounting data.

In resolution 2 (XV), the Commission requested translation from Russian of the definitive document on the MPS and circulation thereof to members of the Commission; continuation, in co-operation with the Conference of European Statisticians, of the study of the relationship between the SNA and the MPS.

In resolution 3 (XV), the Commission requested completion of the analysis of national practices and plans in the field of statistics of the distribution of income, consumption and wealth in countries with differing social and economic systems and with differing levels of economic development; preparation of draft international guidelines for an integrated system of statistics in this field. In this connection, ECA convened a Working Group on Income Distribution Statistics in 1968.

The Commission discussed a project for 1968-1971 on international comparison of production, income and expenditure aggregates, and some countries indicated a willingness to participate in the project. Arrangements have been made in co-operation with ECA to include at least one and possibly three African countries in the International Comparison Project now in progress.

In resolution 4 (XV), the Commission requested publication of the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) (this has been issued as Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 4, Rev. 2) and numeric and alphabetic indexes thereto; preparation of a framework of a commodity classification scheme linked with the revised ISIC.

In discussing an IMF report on balance of payments statistics, the Commission emphasized the importance of achieving concordance between the revised SNA and the Fund's Balance of Payments Manual.

In resolution 5 (XV), the Commission requested revision and publication of the proposals for international recommendations for a system of industrial statistics (these have been issued as Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 48) as new international recommendations in the field of industrial statistics. The Commission discussed the preparation of lists of industrial commodities for which production and consumption data should be compiled in industrial inquiries; it supported the work being done in this field and approved the proposal that further lists should be developed to meet the general needs of inquiries undertaken less often than annually.

In resolution 6 (XV), the Commission requested revision and publication of the proposals for international recommendations for construction statistics (these have been issued as Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 47) as new international recommendations in this field, as well as preparation of a study on construction production, price and cost indexes.

The Commission reaffirmed the view expressed at its thirteenth session that a 1973 World Programme of Industrial Statistics should be undertaken and requested the Secretariat to draft proposals for such a Programme. In resolution 7 (XV), the Commission requested preparation of a manual on the problems of conducting industrial inquiries as a supplement to the recommendations for the 1973 World Programme of Industrial Statistics; development and publication of internationally comparable industrial data, including the annual publication of industrial commodity production statistics and of establishment-type statistics on production, employment and related indicators of industrial activity and structure; revision of the study entitled Index Numbers of Industrial Production; preparation of a study of national practices in distributive- and service-trade statistics as a basis for revising the present international recommendations in this field.

In resolution 8 (XV), the Commission requested the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to adopt a draft resolution (unanimously adopted by ECOSOC on 31 May 1968 as resolution 1305 (XLIV)) which recommends that States Members of the United Nations or of the specialized agencies compile basic data on industry for 1973 or a year close to 1973, taking account of the international recommendations.

In resolution 9 (XV), the Commission requested ECOSOC to adopt a draft resolution (unanimously adopted by ECOSOC on 31 May 1968 as resolution 1306 (XLIV)) which requests the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the executive heads of the specialized agencies, to take steps to promote arrangements to ensure the development of an

integrated and co-ordinated international statistical programme, based on longer-term planning than is now in effect, thus contributing to the efficiency of national statistical systems in both developed and developing countries, as well as to the effective use of resources at the international level. The Commission discussed the statistical programme of the United Nations and the specialized agencies based on an "Integrated Statement of International Statistical Programme, 1968-1972" (E/CN.3/373). The Commission re-emphasized the urgent need for adequate training facilities in the developing countries and took special note of the proposals for the establishment of institutes for the training of professional government statisticians in Africa and Asia. See E/CN.14/CAS.6/18 for details on new training facilities in Africa.

The Commission expressed appreciation of the progress made in the development of the International Trade Statistics Centre. The Commission recommended that countries inform the Centre annually of changes in country codes and deviations from the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and suggested that concordances between national classifications and the SITC should be published along with the notes in Commodity Trade Statistics (Statistical Papers, Series D). The Commission considered a draft classification of external trade statistics by Broad Economic Categories (BEC), whose object is to convert data classified according to the SITC into categories which are meaningful within the framework of the SNA, of interest to analysts and of particular significance for developing countries. While the Commission agreed that improvements had been incorporated into the classification, it again criticised the feature of the dual-use commodities and the allocation of these commodities to more than one end-use category. The Commission suggested that definitions of durable and non-durable goods used in the BEC be reviewed and that further studies be carried out to establish more suitable definitions. The Commission considered that the SITC, Revised, should be reviewed.

In resolution 10 (XV), the Commission requested ECOSOC to adopt a draft resolution (unanimously adopted by ECOSOC on 31 May 1968 as resolution 1307 (XLIV)) which requests the Secretary-General to undertake a World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics, and recommends that States Members of the United Nations endeavour to establish a system of vital records and statistics, or to improve the existing system, to the level where it will yield, in particular, reliable statistics of births and deaths adequate, inter alia, to meet the needs of economic and social development planning and especially to provide the statistical base for planning the development and utilization of human resources. The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the progress made in implementing the 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programmes and particularly commended the development of regional variants of the world recommendations.

In resolution 11 (XV), the Commission requested circulation of the draft recommendations for the improvement and standardization of vital statistics for comments and submission of the revised recommendations to the Population Commission and the Statistical Commission.

The Commission considered the report of an Expert Group on International Travel Statistics convened by the Secretary-General (Geneva, 26-30 June 1967) pursuant to ECOSOC resolution 1109 (XL). The Group had made recommendations on methods and definitions designed to improve travel statistics without increasing tourist formalities. The Commission considered the report a useful step forward in the development of systematic statistics in this field and thought that further work was necessary to provide the range of data required by the tourist industry.

The Commission considered a document on statistics of research and development (E/CN.3/387) prepared by J. Perlman, consultant to the Secretariat, as well as a document (E/CN.3/389) by UNESCO on its programme in statistics of science and technology. In view of the work already being done by UNESCO and OECD, the Commission suggested that the United Nations Statistical Office play a co-ordinating role, for example, ensure that there is consistency between the concepts, definitions and classifications in the field of research and development and those of the national accounts and balances and input-output tables.