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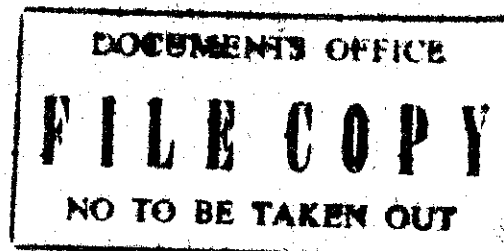
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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA



REPORT OF THE SEMINAR ON CONCEPTS
AND DEFINITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS
(Addis Ababa, 24 May - 1 June 1971)

Organization of the Meeting

Opening and duration of the meeting

1. In accordance with the wishes expressed at the meeting of Customs experts and statisticians held at Brussels in 1968, a seminar on concepts and definitions in International Trade statistics was held at Addis Ababa from 24 May to 1 June 1971.
2. The meeting opened with an address by the Executive Secretary, Mr. R.K.A. Gardiner, in which he stressed the importance of foreign trade statistics in the economy of African countries, and pointed out that they should, as far as possible, reflect all international trade, for financial reasons, because of the importance of indirect taxation and customs duties in African countries. He also mentioned that in some African countries foreign trade statistics were dealt with by a joint secretariat and that all the results were published in the same volume. These bodies were confronted with certain specific problems which it would be interesting for the participants to study, for other countries might join these customs unions, which sometimes were also monetary unions, at some later date.
3. He also pointed out the necessity, for reasons of international comparability for the statistics on international trade published by the different countries, to comply with the recommendations published by the Statistical Office of the United Nations, series M No. 52 "International Trade statistics concepts and definitions" which had been distributed to the participants. He also stressed the importance of the analysis of intra-African trade to the work of the Economic Commission for Africa, and pointed out that such an analysis had to be based on detailed statistics quickly available.

Attendance

4. There were thirty-six participants from the member and associated member countries and organizations present at the meeting: Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Dahomey, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, the People's Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, the UAR, Upper Volta, Uganda; the East African Community, UDEAC, the United Kingdom. The list of participants is appended in Annex I.

Election of Officers

5. Mr. A. Cherkaoui (Morocco) was elected chairman. Mr. E.A. Webber (Sierra Leone) and Mr. A. Damassa (Ethiopia) were elected first and second vice-chairmen respectively.

Agenda

6. The provisional agenda (E/CN.14/CAS.7/TRAD/1) was adopted without any changes.

1. Opening address.
2. Election of chairman and vice-chairman.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Coverage of the statistics.
5. Commodity classification
 - (a) The Standard International Trade Classification (SITC);
 - (b) Classification by Broad Economic Categories (B.E.C.).
6. Valuation.
7. Quantity measurement.
8. Partner country.
9. Areas of difficulties encountered by African Countries in the development of their external trade statistics.
10. Other business.
11. Adoption of the Report.

Discussion of the items

Coverage of the statistics

7. The representative of the Statistical Office of the United Nations gave a brief introduction of document series M no. 52 "International Trade Statistics Concepts and Definitions" which had been prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the Statistical Commission. A second volume devoted to the description of national practices in the field of statistics on foreign trade was being prepared with the co-operation of national statistical departments.

8. On the proposal of the secretariat, the participants thought it preferable to divide the discussion of this item into two; the definition of the term "merchandise", and "the flow of goods and trade system".

9. The secretariat briefly reviewed what is meant by merchandise in international trade. It meant goods the import or export of which contributed to an increase or decrease of the stocks of material resources in a particular country. In accordance with the classification given in the document, the secretariat listed the categories of merchandise to be excluded from statistics, those to be included in statistics and those to be recorded separately.

10. Some participants pointed out that the United Nations document did not indicate whether goods below a certain value, to be decided by each country, should or should not be included in the statistics on foreign trade. In fact by excluding goods of a certain value savings could be made on the cost of data processing without noticeably affecting the accuracy of the information collected. Although admitting that the savings in this respect could be considerable, other participants pointed out that there would be a risk of losing certain important information concerning some industries, and that the threshold value in question would differ between imports and exports, and since conditions varied from country to country it would be difficult to make it the object of an international recommendation.

11. The participants then outlined the difficulties encountered by the statistical departments in their countries due to the inclusion or exclusion of certain trade flows in their statistics. It was pointed out, for example, that it was necessary to set a time limit on temporary imports, or that sometimes difficulties were raised when goods refused by a foreign buyer were returned to the exporting country. Some asked how they should record this type of merchandise, some countries recorded them as re-imports, this could lead to confusion, unless it was brought to the attention of the user; others classified these goods under section 9 of the SITC under the heading goods on return; others made corrective adjustments in the export figures. Some countries also had problems in recording products which were reimported in the country of origin after some form of handling abroad, since the blending or packaging did not change the nature of the product.

12. The participants held long discussions concerning the way in which imports by foreign embassies or armed forces based in the countries should be treated. It was agreed that the recommendations of the United Nations should be followed although their full implementation would lead to some difficulties.

13. Other problems were also voiced, such as the question of diamonds exported from non-producing African countries the corresponding imports of which had not been recorded in their statistics. These countries valued the imports at the export price less a certain trade margin, or on the basis of information obtained from dealers.

The flow of goods and the trade system

14. When introducing this item, the secretariat gave a brief description of the two systems of recording statistics used by African countries: the special trade system and the general trade system. It was not thought worthwhile to go into the details of these systems but the economic and statistical consequence of their use was stressed. On this aspect reference was made to the publication of the Statistical Office of the United Nations, series M. No. 52. The exclusion of entrepôt trade from the special trade system was a major problem as far as foreign trade was concerned, for this could, in many cases, impair the

comparability of statistics between countries. Indeed, it could happen that some imports and exports of a given country might be included in the entrepôt trade of another and might not appear in the special trade of the latter.

15. The participants then briefly described the way in which foreign trade statistics were compiled in their countries. Some of them discussed the problem of the distribution of customs duties between members of a customs union, and the loss of resources which could be incurred by land-locked countries which imported goods nationalized by coastal countries which profited by levying a duty higher than the normal rate. Indeed, although the question of customs duties did not strictly fall within the competence of statisticians, they could not, however, ignore it, because of the importance of indirect taxation to the fiscal system in African countries. It was pointed out that this problem could be solved by obtaining for the products concerned both the country of origin and the country of consignment.

16. Also raised was the problem of products from customs bonded manufacturing plants. It appeared that since these products had already been recorded when imported, there was no need to record them again.

17. Opinions were divided as to whether the countries which could not supply data on general trade could consider: (a) the annual preparation of statistics on merchandise re-exported from customs entrepôts with a breakdown on the basis of the countries of destination as well as countries of origin; (b) the preparation of the approximate figure for entrepôt imports. They would in such a case, given the time lag between the time the goods leave the entrepôt and the time they enter the territory, provide data for converting the special trade system into the general trade system. Some participants felt that national needs should take priority over international comparability; on the other hand, the majority of them felt that it was possible to publish, (foreign trade statistics) at least once a year, in accordance with the new system, since some African countries were already doing so.

18. The following resolution was therefore adopted and it was requested that it be submitted for approval to the Seventh Session of the Conference of Statisticians at the same time as the final report:

"The Seminar on Concepts and Definitions in International Trade Statistics,

Recognizing the importance for countries and international organizations of ensuring the maximum comparability of external trade statistics and the necessity of being able to assess entrepôt trade,

Recommends to those countries which have not already done so that they publish, at least once a year, the results of their external trade, using the system which they do not normally employ (special trade for those countries which publish their statistics using the

general trade system, and the general trade system for those which normally publish them using the special trade system).

19. At this juncture, a number of participants, while expressing their agreement with the resolution, pointed out that any modification of the processing of external trade statistics would require the collaboration of customs or data processing services, which not all of them felt confident of obtaining. It was suggested that it might perhaps be worthwhile planning joint meetings of customs officers and statisticians when it was necessary to discuss problems of external trade.

20. On the question of direct transit, one participant pointed out that in no case should account be taken of goods entering or leaving an entrepôt and that one might be justified in wondering whether this operation did not rather come under the heading of transport services rather than external trade. Furthermore, in order to obtain information on this type of trade, it would be worthwhile having details on the last country of origin and its first country of destination.

Classification of merchandise

(a) Standard International Trade Classification

21. In introducing this item of the agenda, the Secretariat referred to the following documents: Series M No. 52 and E/CN.14/TRAD/3. The representative of the Statistical Office of the United Nations reminded the meeting of the terms governing the preparation and later the revision of the SITC to permit a correspondence between this nomenclature and the Brussels Tariff nomenclature. He stressed that the two nomenclatures were complementary and served different purposes; the former to meet the need of economic analysis, the latter for tariff application. He also informed the meeting that a second revision of the SITC was in hand and that the results of the revision were to be presented to the Statistical Commission for approval early in 1972.

22. Several participants described the nomenclature used by their countries for statistics on foreign trade. The French-speaking countries use a nomenclature based on the Brussels Tariff nomenclature and also publish foreign trade statistics in accordance with this nomenclature. On the other hand, the majority of English-speaking countries have been using the BTN as the basis of tariff classification, but continue to publish their statistics in accordance with the SITC. This raises problems when both codes are indicated in the customs declarations, since, for fiscal purposes the Customs check only the BTN code and the statistical service must check the SITC. In addition, the tariff nomenclature is not sufficiently detailed for some articles, making conversion into SITC difficult. It was pointed out that if these countries were to use the BTN at a four-digit level, in addition to a letter such as appears in the series M no. 34, it would not be necessary to indicate both codes, since mechanical or electronic conversion would create no problem. The Malawi representative pointed out that his country uses the Brussels Nomenclature for

domestic purposes but that this data is converted into SITC for submission to International Organizations.

23. The representative of the Statistical Office of the United Nations informed the meeting that his department used the SITC classification in its publications of data supplied by countries on imports and exports, in the "Statistical Papers, Series D, Commodity Trade Statistics", and that values were expressed in US dollars. He stated that the countries which were experiencing difficulties of conversion could, through the offices of the United Nations Resident Representative send their taped records to New York, and that these would be speedily returned together with a print-out of the converted data expressed either in dollars or in national currency. He added, that those countries which did not have computers, but only standard equipment, could ask the help of the ECA in solving this problem.

24. The representative of France outlined the research work which was being done to establish a universal nomenclature which would meet the requirements of international trade, and be suitable for statistics on international trade, transport, insurance, banking, etc.... This new nomenclature would take special account of that revolution in international trade, the introduction of the container system of transport. It was pointed out, nevertheless, that the completion of the work on this nomenclature would take several years and that the numerous existing financial problems would also have to be solved.

(b) Classification by Broad Economic categories (CBEC)

25. The representative of the United Nations Statistical Office, introducing this item, referred to document E/CN.14/CAS.7/TRAD/7 and a document which gave details of the products in each of the broad economic categories. He said that the Statistical Commission had recommended that the data on broad economic categories of imports and exports covering : food, industrial supplies, capital goods, consumer durables and non-durables, should be compiled for the world, the principal regions and for each reporting country. Further to that recommendation, the Statistical Office had established the classification by broad economic categories, and the Commission at its sixteenth session had approved the final draft.

26. The representative of the Statistical Office said that, originally, the BEC was intended mainly for United Nations use, but that the Statistical Commission had pointed out that "..... once an international BEC was established, national classifications of this type will inevitably be attracted towards it and it will eventually tend to serve as a guideline and ultimately as a standard with wide use" and that "..... countries might wish to adapt the classification for national purpose in different ways to meet national requirements. Consequently, the classification was not to be regarded as a 'standard' classification in the same sense as was, for example, the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC)".

27. The secretariat then outlined this nomenclature, which made it possible for those using it to obtain aggregates for the three basic categories in the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA): capital equipment, intermediate goods and consumer goods. The drawback was that a product might be used for various but, broadly speaking, products were listed under the various BEC categories according to their most usual end use. A separate category had, however, been provided for the two products which were of special importance to world trade: Motor cars, which were commonly used either as capital equipment or as durable consumer goods, and motor spirit which was non-durable and intended for use both by industry and households.

28. The debate was then opened on the various aspects of this classification. It was suggested that some categories might be revised; for example, there was only one for aircraft, as in the SITC, although the end use of commercial aircraft was not the same as that of military aircraft. It was requested that in the current revision of the SITC the number of positions for parts and accessories of the aircraft be increased. Other suggestions were that a more detailed classification was necessary; that, it might be useful to have a sub-category for building materials. It was also agreed that for exports a classification of commodities based on industries of origin might be preferable to a classification by end use.

29. However, it was made clear that this classification was only intended as a guideline and that countries, if they used it, could adapt it to their needs; but international comparability, in such a case, might no longer be guaranteed. It was also pointed out that the positions in the BEC corresponded to those in the SITC and that consequently data of particular use in compiling national accounts could be easily obtained. The representative of the Statistical Office said that countries could also obtain BEC data by sending their tapes to New York.

Valuation

30. The secretariat presented this item on the basis of Chapter III of Series M No. 52, pointing out firstly that valuation of commodities in foreign trade presented special difficulties. A commodity, at the time of import, might have one value in the market existing between exporters in one country and importers in another, namely the transaction value, and a different value in the importing country, the resale value. Similarly, a commodity at the time of export might have a transaction value different from the market value in the exporting country, the domestic value. It was stated that of these three values, the transaction value was the closest to the real value and that in fact it was the only one available, thanks to the invoices. The 1928 Convention had recommended that "There shall be maintained or established the system of valuation known as declared values, that is to say, values declared by importers or exporters in respect of each individual transaction." For imports the transaction value would generally be the value c.i.f., and for exports the value f.o.b.

31. With reference to the conversion of values expressed in the national currency into a standard unit, it was pointed out that African countries did not as a rule practise the system of floating exchange rates or of multiple exchange rates, and that this conversion therefore offered no major problems. When values expressed in foreign currencies were to be converted, the customs services in Africa generally used the banking exchange rates. Some participants pointed that the evaluation of goods in stock at the time of valuation raised special problems.

32. Most of the participants said that the trade statistics of their countries were generally established on c.i.f. figures for imports and f.o.b. figures for exports. Some countries, however, in order to compare the cost of the goods, excluding the cost of insurance and freight, had tried to prepare their trade balance on the basis of f.o.b. import figures. The East African Economic Community, were considering valuing their air-freighted imports f.o.b. for the calculation of customs duties only, in order to encourage imports by air and reestablish the balance between the two types of air traffic. It was pointed out that the spread of transport by container would give rise to problems through the emphasis on pricing exports ex-factory or c.i.f. in view of the difficulty of separating transport costs incurred in the territory of the exporting country from those relating to the sea journey or costs incurred in the importing country.

33. There was a reference to the special case of countries forming a customs union. In the case of the EAC, Uganda's imports, or the majority of them, were valued for accounting purposes at the port of unloading. It followed, therefore, that the country's imports were undervalued, and its exports overvalued by the cost of transport between Mombasa and the Uganda frontier. For the purpose of charging duty it was, therefore, necessary to adjust the declared values. The Statistics Department of the UDEAC established three sets of accounts: one for statistical values (the value at the port of arrival), another for the purpose of taxation (the value at the frontier of the UDEAC), a third for national frontier values (the value at the frontier of each country).

34. In some countries, because of lack of information concerning the transaction value, at the moment of making the custom's declaration, market values established by the customs were used. The result being that the statistics for these countries (for certain products,) showed the market value rather than the transaction value.

35. It was pointed out that there might be several export values for the same product, according to the national source used. Morocco was quoted as an example, where the valuations of exports differed according to whether the figures consulted were those published by the customs, the Exchange-control Department or the Head-Office of the mining concerns. This was also true of Togo, where the Compagnie Togolaise des Mines de Benin valued phosphate exports according to the

market price while the customs, at a later date, used the actual transaction value. To solve this problem some countries had set up commissions for statistical values.

36. It was also pointed out that the transaction value did not always take into account the discounts granted to companies having various branches, or the reductions allowed by shipping companies to regular customers, and it was difficult for the customs authorities to know what these amounts were. However, in the EAC it seemed that the customs were in a position to obtain these figures and correct the transaction value. Some of the participants pointed out that the values which appeared in the statements of accounts were sometimes market values, but that at a later date these figures were corrected and that publications of foreign trade used the transaction value.

Quantity measurement

37. The secretariat introduced this item with the observation that units of quantity were very useful because they avoided the valuation problems of multiple exchange rates and of rapid deterioration of exchange rates in certain currencies. They were also important for transport studies and for calculating foreign trade figures. It was pointed out that the 1928 convention on economic statistics had made no precise recommendations on this point. It seemed, however, that net weights were more suitable for economic analysis, were used in most cases by the African countries. It had been observed that the United Nations publication, Series M No. 52 suggested that quantum data expressed in gross weights, should be published at least once a year for certain commodities where the discrepancy between gross and net weight was considerable and the gross weights were in fact of interest for transport statistics. The secretariat then pointed out that the majority of African countries which had hitherto used the British system of weights and measures were now making increasing use of the metric system, and that would facilitate the comparison of data.

38. The participants described the practices for recording foreign trade statistics in their respective countries. Some customs documents included both net and gross weights, in others because of lack of space on forms some data was omitted. It was pointed out that the United Nations document recommended the inclusion of certain specific additional units for ships and aircraft. The participants also pointed out that the list of commodities for which additional units were required was growing all the time, for example, the import and export statistics for fertilizers were expressed more and more in terms of their active constituents. A suggestion was made that the United Nations might, in the SITC, recommend the units to be used for each category.

39. It was thought that it would be useful to have coefficients for converting the gross weight of various products into net weight, and it was pointed out that the Statistical Office of the United Nations

were carrying out studies in this respect. This research might also be of interest to the Customs Co-operation Council.

40. A long discussion on containers followed to decide whether or not they should be classified as packing. It was pointed out that according to the 1956 Customs Convention, containers should be excluded from the statistics, because they were considered to be means of transport and not to be confused with packing. In order to dispel certain doubts, a small drafting group compiled the following definitions and distributed them to the participants:

- A. "A container is understood to be an ancillary transport device designed for easy loading with goods in bulk or lightly packed, and to protect them suitably from damage or theft; this device is designed for repeated use, and must permit straightforward loading, conveyance by any transport means, as well as lend itself to easy transport from one means to another. "(International Union of Railways)."
- B. "Recommendations on Transport Statistics, Document Series M. No. 5 "International Standard Definition for Transport Statistics" indicates that the weight of "containers" (i.e. special equipment in which less than full vehicle loads are placed for protection and ease in handling) should be excluded from these figures".

41. It was also suggested that note 2 at the foot of page 51 of document Series M No. 52 could be drafted as follows: "Boxes, cartons, or other means of containing goods which are used solely to protect individual commodities (or set of commodities) are considered as packing. Bulk containers or "load units" used in association with and as accessories for vehicles in order to effect the carriage of goods should also be excluded from quantum figures when measuring the weight of goods being moved in the trade".

Partner Country

42. In introducing this item the representative of the secretariat referred briefly to the various methods of recording the partner country for imports and exports. Drawing up statistics on the basis of purchase and sale raised certain problems including the difficulty of knowing the place of business of the seller or the purchaser. The concept of the country of origin or production was imperfect for international comparison, although it had the advantage of showing the connexions existing between the producing and importing country, which were essential information for the enforcement of import quotas or differential tariffs. In exporting it was difficult to record the country of consumption with any reliability, because that had often not been decided at the time of export. It seemed that a record of trade figures by country of consignment offered the best means of obtaining accurate

statistics offering good comparability. The representative of the Statistical Office said that the United Nations recommended that countries adopt, as far as possible, the method of recording data by country of consignment for their trade statistics. Failing that, the period collection of data by country of consignment was recommended as supplementary information.

43. The participants described the policies followed by the customs authorities in their countries for recording the partner country. It seemed that the majority used the country of origin for imports and the country of destination for exports. Some stated that the customs documents in their countries recorded the country of consignment, but that so far no use had been made of the information. Although the concept of the country of origin was the most commonly used in Africa, because it was of most concern to the customs, its application was awkward, as was made clear in the examples provided. Some speakers gave the percentage of processing required in their countries to determine the country of origin: in the case of the East African Community it was 30 per cent. The definition of country of origin as applied in the Common Market countries was also quoted, with reference to document EEC REG 802 (1968).

44. Some participants asked for more precise definitions of partner country before they could take decisions on the recommendations to be approved by the Seminar, and it was suggested that the definitions in document Series M No. 52, while clear enough, could with advantage be accompanied by annexed diagrams indicating the principal trade flows. The United Kingdom representative then submitted the following text:

"The meeting recognizes that information based on country of origin and destination is unsatisfactory for purposes of international statistical comparison and for the study of trade flows. It therefore recommends that investigations be made by individual countries, with assistance from the United Nations, to see whether alternative or additional data, based on the country of consignment, could be provided".

The secretariat accepted this recommendation which was approved by the Seminar, but some participants said that their countries might meet with difficulties in practice in changing from the concept of country of origin to that of country of consignment. It was also observed that to ensure better comparability, countries should use in not only the concept of country of consignment but also the general trade system in their foreign trade statistics.

45. The representative of the Statistical Office also introduced two documents: "Customs Areas of the World" Series M, No. 30/Rev.1 and United Nations Standard Country code; Series M No. 49. He said that the geographical code of the United Nations was essentially for the use of the Secretariat, but, that other organizations, for example FAO, had adopted it. He drew attention to the main characteristics of the Code,

pointing out particularly that it contained a special list for external trade statistics and another for industrial statistics and for national accounts. He stressed that the list of abbreviations in Annex IV would prove useful to national statistics departments.

Areas of difficulty encountered by African countries in the development of their external trade statistics

46. The secretariat introduced document E/CN.14/CAS.7/TRAD/2 which dealt with this subject. No claim was made that the document covered all the difficulties which might be encountered, but an effort had been made to deal with the most important ones: those arising out of the organization of statistical and customs services, those having their origins in history and cases of customs unions, those caused by the inadequate recording of intra-african trade, those of valuation and determining the partner country, and the processing, publication and analysis of foreign trade statistics. It was agreed that quite a number of these difficulties had been discussed under previous items on the agenda.

47. Some participants then outlined the difficulties encountered by their countries in these matters. The representative of the EAC said that the difficulties arising out of the existence of a customs union were not as great as appeared from the document, and were largely compensated for by the larger internal market. The Gambian representative although convinced that the problems were likely to be identical for all the countries, thought that they were particularly acute in his country, and said that he would be grateful for any suggestions which could be of help to the statistics department in his country. The representative of the UDEAC spoke of the problems faced by the statistical department of his organization in the routing of customs documents: many of these documents were often lost or went astray and the delay in forwarding made manual processing necessary. He mentioned the financial problems raised by the large sums which to be paid to the Inter-State organization for data processing of foreign trade statistics. Frequently mistakes appeared only at the stage of the statistical analysis, and then valuable time was lost in retracing the steps in its preparation in order to discover where the errors had been made. It was pointed out in reply that these mistakes might come to light if appropriate checks were introduced in the programmes for computer processing, although checks based on the analysis of unit values were not always satisfactory in view of the variations in the unit price of certain capital goods.

48. The Seminar considered the problem of fraud and undervaluation at some length. A number of delegates proposed methods which they felt might make it possible to discover the approximate percentage of undervaluation for certain products. In this connexion the Ivory Coast participant pointed out that the Comité de la Balance Commerciale corrected the foreign trade statistics, using information supplied by various producing and marketing organizations, such as the Livestock Services, Mining, the National Equalization Fund and National Associations. The

Moroccan participant recommended a method used in his country, which involved comparing information obtained from consumer surveys with that derived from the analysis of production and movements in stocks to which imports were added and where necessary, deductions were made for exports. He also mentioned sample surveys for certain products. It was noted that information was obtainable from the study of cash transfers which could be traced through the identification markings printed on CFA notes. It was pointed out that except in the case of certain products, such transfers did not always represent the purchase or sale of goods, but could for example, relate to sums repatriated by migrant workers. It was suggested that in the absence of other methods, it might be possible to compare exports with corresponding imports from partner countries; some misgivings were expressed as to the value of this method, but it was explained that customs agreements and the existence of joint committees between neighbouring countries, such as existed between the Ivory Coast and Ghana, could help in providing more reliable figures. A number of participants asked the secretariat to carry out research into the problem of fraud but it appeared that this type of study was difficult to undertake with any success on an international scale, since the basic documents required were not available in the countries concerned.

49. The problem of the corrections to be made in monthly data was discussed, and it was pointed out that these corrections could without difficulty be carried forward to the following months or be shown in the yearly statistics. The Seminar also studied the problem of late publications. The delays varied from country to country, but generally speaking, every effort was being made to reduce them to a minimum. The representatives of some countries expressed misgivings concerning the workload this particular type of information requested, represented for the statistical departments. Several methods are used to mitigate these difficulties. The Seminar dealt briefly with the estimates concerning the valuation of imports and exports when final figures were still not known.

50. The participants finally discussed the foreign trade indices. It was necessary to avoid confusing the idea of price indices with the average values of imports and exports. Opinion on the comparative advantage of manual calculations versus computer calculations was divided. On the other hand it seemed that the participants were agreed to resist pressures to publish excessively detailed indices. Doubts were also expressed concerning the possibility of using the corresponding exports indices of the developed countries for finished goods and capital equipment instead of the average value indices of imports. The Seminar thought that it would be worthwhile for the United Nations to compile a list of the methods used by the various countries for calculating their foreign trade indices and that these should be published. It was also proposed that for information purposes the work sheets used for these calculations be exchanged.

Other business

50. On this item, speakers made several suggestions on studies which might be carried out at meetings or courses which might be organized. The Seminar recognized that a two or three-months course (at international level) to initiate the statisticians in customs techniques could not perhaps be justified, and that courses at country level were perhaps more useful. It also recognized that GATT or UNCTAD might be in a better position to organize a seminar on the marketing of tropical products, and that approaches would be made for that purpose to the international organizations concerned.

52. The representative of the East African Community supported by other speakers proposed the organization at the sub-regional level, under the statistical institutes at Rabat and Makerere, of courses of short duration on external trade statistics, to replace in-service training, which (for lack of adequate staffing) could not always be provided. The secretariat representative stated that similar courses had been organized for national accounts, and would be organized in 1972 for industrial statistics. There was, however, a financial problem: while the budget of the Makerere institute did provide for such courses, financial difficulties might arise over their organization at Rabat.

53. Most of the participants welcomed the suggestion that a working group on foreign trade indices should be constituted after the preparation of the documents on the subject. It would not necessarily aim at drafting recommendations, but at the useful exchange of information on and the methodology involved in, these indices. The secretariat pointed out that the programme and budget for meetings for the next two years had already been drawn up, but in the case of need a special item might be included in the agenda for the Seminar on External Transactions. It was, moreover, stressed that, in general, financial restraints were decisive, and for specific problems recourse could be had to the regional advisers or to the members of the staff of the Statistical Office of the United Nations provided these demands were limited to the strict minimum necessary, because of the limited number of staff available.

54. There were also references to the standardization of customs documents, on which work had already been undertaken in other regions. These documents included statistical information which required urgent standardization. The suggestion was again put forward that future meetings on foreign trade statistics should as far as possible include participants from customs services.

55. The participants then proposed that the ECA study national customs nomenclatures and the problems arising out of their alignment with the SITC revised.

56. The draft report prepared by the secretariat was adopted, with a few modifications, by the Seminar on 1 June 1971.

ANNEX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>Countries</u>	<u>Names</u>
Algeria	M. Mohamed Boumati, Chef du Bureau des statistiques du commerce extérieur, Direction des statistiques, 8-10 rue Desfontaines, Alger.
Cameroon	M. Ngae Moubeké Moïse, Ingénieur des travaux statistiques et sous-directeur des statistiques économiques du Ministère du Plan et de l'aménagement du territoire, B.P. 660, Yaoundé.
Central African Republic	M.A. Koyamba, Directeur de la Direction de la statistique générale et de la conjoncture, B.P. 954, Bangui.
Chad	M. Naim Sabit, Service de la statistique générale, Commissariat général au Plan, B.P. 453, Fort-Lamy.
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