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E C L A C

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

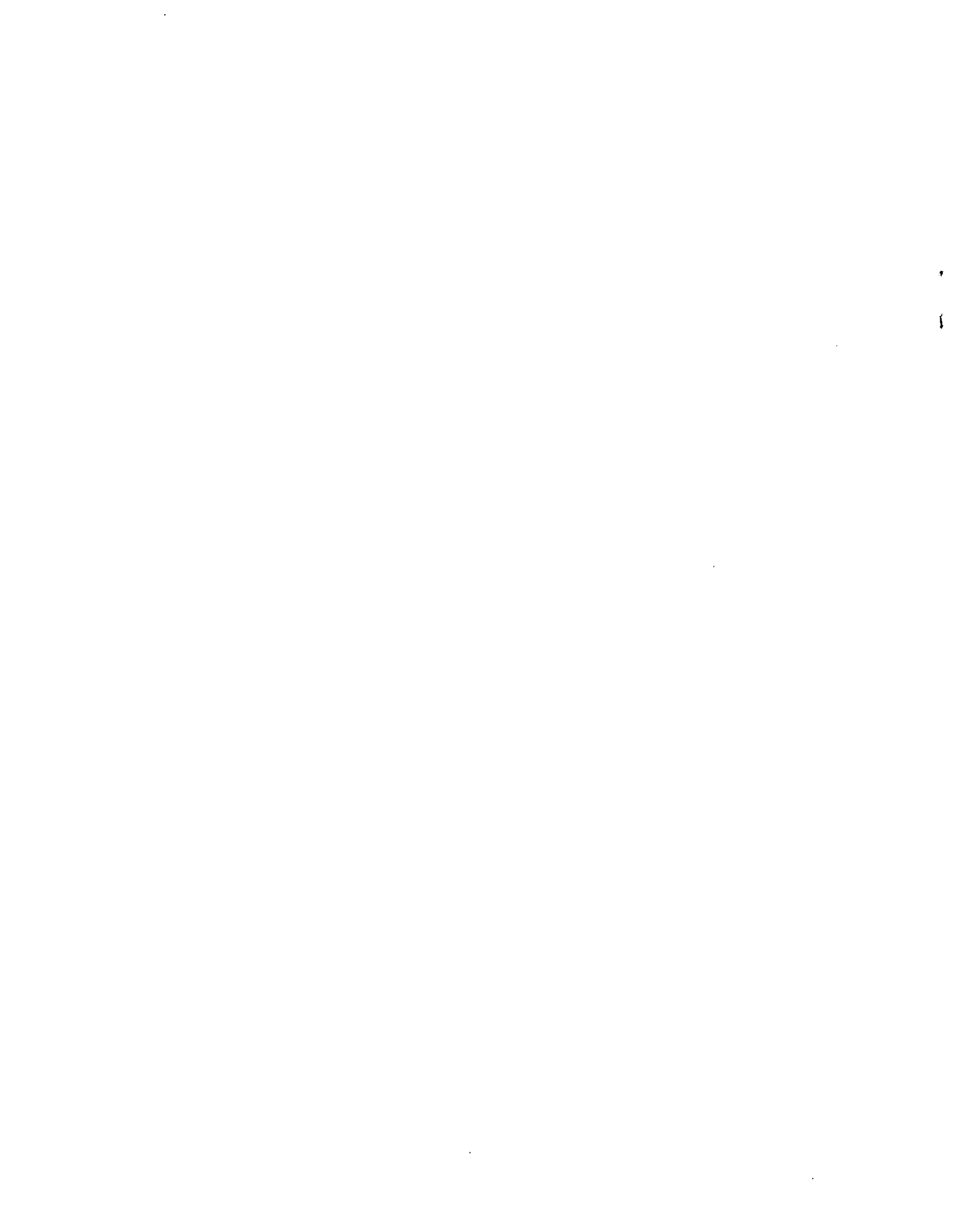
Ninth Inter-American Conference on Statistics organized  
by the Permanent Administrative Committee of the Inter-  
American Conference on Statistics.

Rio de Janeiro, 15-18 September 1986.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN  
THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION \*

\* This document was prepared by the Statistics and Quantitative Analysis  
Division of ECLAC.



## A. General background

1. At the meeting of COM/CIE held in Panama in June 1986, ECLAC was requested to prepare a brief document to provide the Directors of Statistics with background information for their discussion of the participation of the Latin American countries in the meeting of the United Nations Statistical Commission to take place in 1987.
2. The United Nations Statistical Commission meets every two years. It discusses topics related to the international statistical system and submits recommendations to the Economic and Social Council of the Organization. It has 24 members,\*/ four of whom are Latin American (Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Mexico).
3. The next meeting of the Commission will take place between 23 February and 4 March, 1987 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In the years when the Commission does not meet, work is carried out by a group that deals with international statistical programmes and their co-ordination. This group last met in April 1986 in Geneva. Normally this working-group undertakes the preparation of the agenda for the meetings of the Statistical Commission.
4. The following sections contain a brief description of the agenda for the next meeting, comments on items on the agenda accompanied by programmes either envisaged or under execution, and a list of some aspects of the work programme of the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO), on which the Commission must take decisions.

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\*/ Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Ghana, India, Ireland, Libya, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Spain, Togo, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom and the United States.

B. Agenda for the 24th (1987) Session of the  
Statistical Commission

5. The agenda for the meeting of the Statistical Commission generally includes five types of items:

- a) Special issues.
- b) Substantive issues related to broad areas of national and international statistical tasks.
- c) Technical co-operation.
- d) Work programme of international organizations, with particular reference to UNSO.
- e) Tentative programme for the next session.

6. There are two special issues (item 3 of the agenda) to be discussed by the Commission at its 1987 session:

- a) Matters related to communication between national and international agencies and development of data bases.
- b) Special problems of the less statistically developed of the developing countries.

7. The Statistical Commission will discuss six substantive issues (items 4 to 9 of the agenda) as follows:

- a) Dissemination of international statistics.
- b) System of national accounts and balances.
- c) International economic classification.
- d) Price statistics.
- e) Industry, energy and environmental statistics.
- f) Demographic and social statistics.

8. For each of the above mentioned topics, UNSO distributes some months in advance some very brief documents that summarize the current situation and the work carried out by the United Nations System and which propose issues and actions to be discussed by the Committee.

C. Issues for which there are programmes either envisaged or under execution

10. With regard to the issue of National Accounts and Balances, the United Nations System is carrying out an exercise whose purpose is to revise the current System of National Accounts. At the last session of the Statistical Commission a series of meetings for the 1986-1990 period was approved. In 1986 some regional meetings are being held to make an inventory of the countries' experiences and proposals. In April 1986, ECLAC organized a meeting of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean at its Santiago headquarters. This was attended by 16 countries. The most important aspects of the debate were published in the Report of the Regional Seminar on National Accounts (LC/G.1423). This report formed part of the material discussed at an interregional meeting that took place in Geneva in June 1986.

11. A group of international organizations such as the OECD, IMF and UNSO have been working on this issue. It is worth mentioning that the participation in this work of representatives of the developing countries and of the regional commissions (except for ECE) has met with some difficulties due to lack of resources or due to the fact that most of the working meetings take place in the United States or in Europe.

12. With respect to International Economic Classification, the Commission has been mainly concerned with SITC, ISIC and CPC (Central Product Classification). CPC aims at combining the classifications of goods production and commerce. The Committee approved the third revised version of SITC and issued recommendations both for its application and for linking it with other classifications. It may be of interest to point out that few Latin American countries have been able to adopt the NAB classification associated with the second revised version and that this one has been used since not very many years ago. There is no doubt that the ongoing programme implies an important challenge for the Region.

13. With respect to Price Statistics, the United Nations System is working on the fifth phase of the United Nations International Comparison Project (ICP). This phase has the participation of the European countries, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Latin American countries have encountered numerous difficulties both of a technical and financial nature that have hindered their participation in this phase. It is possible that the preliminary results of Phase IV published by UNSO may well have helped to limit the regional efforts on this issue.

14. With respect to Industry, Energy and Environmental Statistics, UNSO is mainly carrying out work related to the co-ordination of the systems used by the different national and international bodies. As regards the industrial field, work is in progress on a recommendation for a statistical programme on home and small-scale industries. In the energy field, there is an Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics. With respect to the

Environment, a Scheme was published in 1984 for the preparation of environmental statistics and the Statistical Commission has been engaged in the promotion of its application. This involves, among other measures, the preparation of a technical manual on selected high-priority statistics in the spheres of human settlements and natural resources, dissemination of information and a technical assistance programme.

15. With respect to Demographic and Social Statistics, there are two main fields of action: social indicators, and population and housing censuses. The issue of population and housing censuses is dealt with in other documents presented at this Conference. As for social indicators, the United Nations System has been working on a Manual of Social Indicators. Regional participation in this task has been constrained by the same reasons mentioned in the case of National Accounts. It should be pointed out that the work carried out by ILO in the field of occupational classifications is often the subject of discussion in this agenda item.

D. Work plan for the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO).

16. The Statistical Committee discusses the work plan of UNSO at its meetings. This plan is made up of programmes subdivided into programme elements. A list of the programmes is included in an annex to give a fuller picture. After the debates, the Committee produces a list of the 10% top priority and 10% minimum priority elements (measured in terms of human resources to be used). As an example, the decision adopted in 1986 was the following:

a) Top priority

- 1.1 Perfecting the United Nations System of National Accounts and its linkage with the System of Balances of the National Economy;
- 1.2 Development, updating and harmonization of uniform international classifications;
- 1.6 Preparation of conceptual frameworks, classifications and methods for demographic, housing and human settlements statistics;
- 1.9 Preparation of conceptual frameworks, methods and classifications for environmental statistics;
- 1.10 Preparation of conceptual frameworks and methods for statistics and indicators related to special groups of the population;
- 6.2 Collecting, compiling and disseminating social, housing and human settlements statistics;

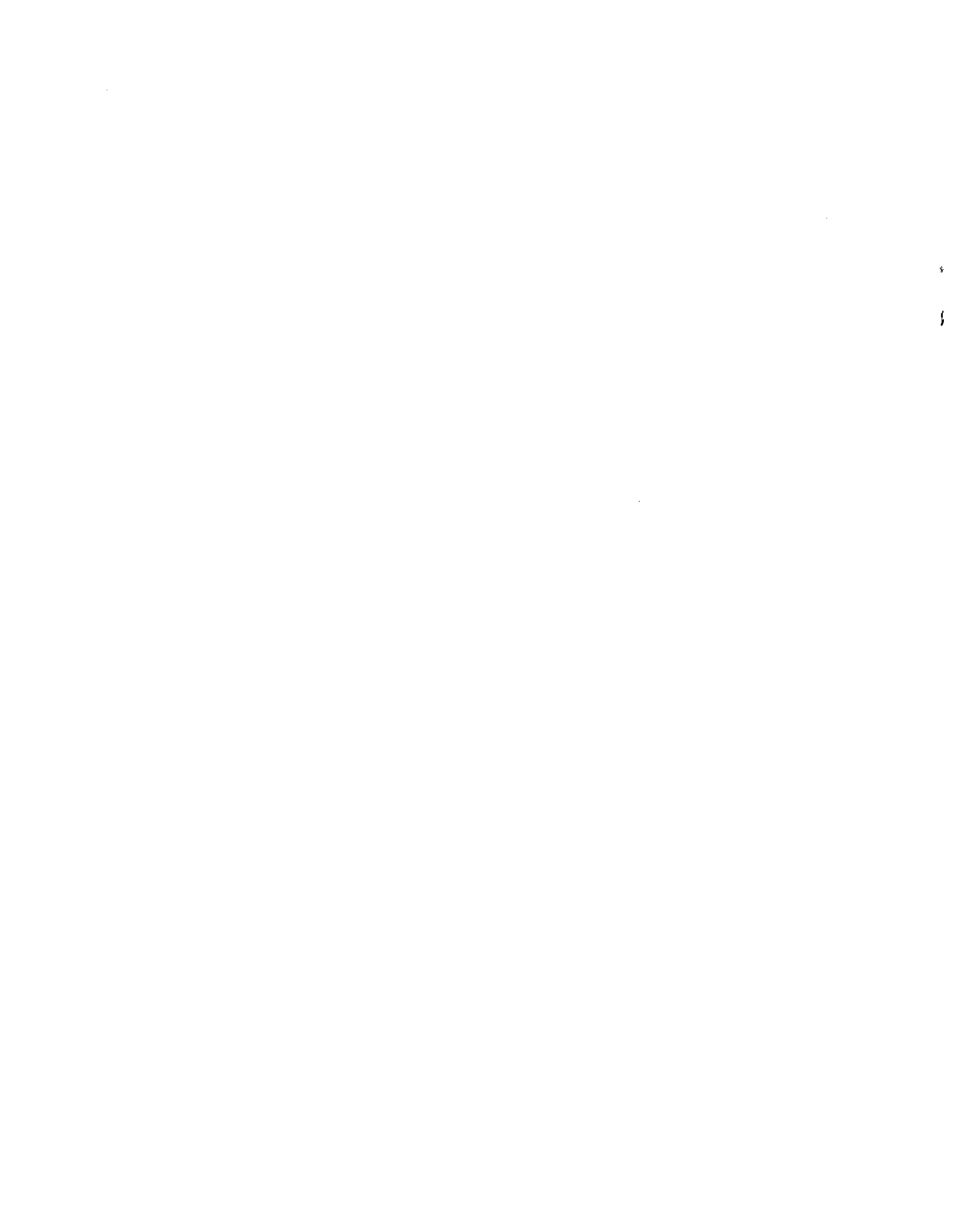
- 8.1 Increasing the statistical capability of developing countries;
- 8.2 Increasing the developing countries' capability for statistical data processing.

b) Minimum priority

- 1.4 Preparation of conceptual frameworks, classifications and methods for foreign trade, transport and other related statistics.
- 1.5 Preparation of conceptual frameworks and methods for price statistics and for comparisons of purchasing power;
- 1.7 Preparation of conceptual frameworks and methods for the integration and linkage of social, demographic and related statistics and indicators;
- 3.2 Collecting, compiling and disseminating statistics on income distribution, consumption and accumulation;
- 5.2 Statistics on prices of basic commodities which are subject of foreign trade transactions;
- 5.3 Collection, compilation and dissemination of price and related statistics.

17. The Commission ends its sessions by discussing the agenda for the next meeting. This is a suitable moment for the Region to bring up issues that concern the Latin American countries. The inclusion of a subject is generally accompanied by the allocation of funds on the part of UNSO for the preparation of a report. At its April 1986 meeting, the working group agreed on a list of issues whose study will be proposed to the Commission. They are as follows:

- I (f) The statistics market;
- I (g) Cost-efficiency of statistical services;
- II (a) International trade;
- II (d) Maritime economic activities;
- II (g) The services sector.





ANNEX

Subprogramme 1: Development of concepts and methods

- 1.1 Further development of the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) and linkage with the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)\*.
- 1.2 Development, updating and harmonization of standard international classifications.\*
- 1.3 Development of concepts, classifications and methods of industrial, construction, distributive trade and energy and related statistics.
- 1.4 Development of concepts, classification and methods for international trade, transport and related statistics.\*\*
- 1.5 Development of concepts and methods for statistics of prices and purchasing power comparisons.
- 1.6 Development of concepts, classifications and methods for demographic, housing and human settlement statistics.\*
- 1.7 Development of concepts and methods for statistics and indicators on special population groups and co-ordination of social statistics and indicators.
- 1.8 Development and use of statistics for services to children and youth.
- 1.9 Development of concepts, methods and classifications for environment statistics.

Subprogramme 2: Application of advanced technology in collection, processing and dissemination of statistics.

- 2.1 General compendiums of economic and social statistics.
- 2.2 Improved computerization of statistics.

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\* Highest priority

\*\* Lowest priority

Subprogramme 3: National accounts, industry, international trade and transport statistics.

- 3.1 Collection, compilation and dissemination of national accounts statistics.
- 3.2 Collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics on the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation.\*\*
- 3.3 Collection, compilation and dissemination of industrial, construction and distributive trade statistics.
- 3.4 Collection, compilation, dissemination and analysis of international trade statistics.
- 3.5 Collection, compilation and dissemination of transport statistics.

Subprogramme 4: Energy and related statistics.

- 4.1 Collection, compilation and dissemination of energy and related statistics.

Subprogramme 5: Price statistics and related areas.

- 5.1 Collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics for international comparisons of real gross domestic product and purchasing power of currencies.
- 5.2 Price statistics for internationally traded commodities.\*\*
- 5.3 Collection, compilation and dissemination of price and related statistics.\*\*

Subprogramme 6: Social, demographic and environment statistics.

- 6.1 Collection, compilation and dissemination of demographic statistics.
- 6.2 Collection, compilation and dissemination of social, housing and human settlements.
- 6.3 Collection, compilation and dissemination of environment statistics.\*\*

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\* Highest priority

\*\* Lowest priority

Subprogramme 7: Co-ordination of international statistical programmes.

- 7.1 Co-ordination of the statistics programme of the United Nations.
- 7.2 Review and co-ordination of statistical publications.\*\*
- 7.3 Provision of statistical services to the General Assembly organs and other bodies on request.\*

Subprogramme 8: Support of technical co-operation.

- 8.1 Improvement of statistical capabilities of developing countries.
- 8.2 Improvement of statistical data processing capabilities of developing countries.

Subprogramme 9: Programme support

- 9.1 Programme formulation and management.

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\* Highest priority

\*\* Lowest priority

