In 2000, the United Nations continued its statistical work programme. The 24-member Statistical Commission, at its thirty-first session, adopted the methodological references to the tourism satellite account developed by the World Tourism Organization and noted the launching of PARIS 21—the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century—which aimed to build statistical capacity by helping to develop well-managed statistical systems. The Commission, having reviewed the work of a number of established bodies and international organizations, made specific recommendations regarding the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts and the production of statistical handbooks and manuals. It recognized the United Nations Statistics Division's ongoing efforts to make crucial information and materials available using the Internet, and welcomed the production of international trade statistics on CD-ROM.

The Commission stressed the need for continuous dialogue between producers of statistics and policy makers, effective partnerships at the national level and the accuracy of data.

The Subcommittee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination met in September.

Work of Statistical Commission

The Statistical Commission held its thirty-first session in New York from 29 February to 3 March 2000 [E/2000/24]. Action taken included the adoption of the draft methodological references to the tourism satellite account and, in follow-up to UN conferences and summits, reiteration of the need to lessen the reporting burden of countries by reducing the number of data requests sent by international organizations. The Commission stressed the importance of coordination among and within international organizations and of statistical capacity-building; took note of the launching of the PARIS 21 initiative—the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century [E/CN.3/2001/24]; and expressed support for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) initiative to strengthen capacity-building in social statistics in connection with the General Assembly's special session on the five-year review of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development to be held in June (see p. 1011).

Having reviewed work being undertaken by groups of countries and international organizations in economic, social and environment statistics, the Commission made recommendations for the contents of the compilers' manual for international merchandise trade statistics; gave directions concerning the milestone assessment of the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA); requested the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWNA) to consider a number of specific issues at its April meeting; gave specific directions regarding the content of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Manual on Consumer Price Indices, the process of revision of the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting, and the schedule for completing the Handbook on Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting; and recommended that the next round of the global International Comparison Programme be postponed for at least one year so that a number of steps it had specified could be taken.

The Commission endorsed recommendations for future work on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, made by the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications, and provided specific directions for that work. With regard to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and the General Data Dissemination System of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Commission urged IMF to reinforce the effective partnerships between statistical agencies, central banks and ministries of finance formed as a result of the data standards initiative; expressed concern about the planned extension of SDDS, stating that there was an opportunity cost in terms of the further development of other data systems and stressing the need for priorities and flexibility when implementing the standards; and requested IMF to take the outcomes of the data quality debate into account when reviewing SDDS.

Having considered information regarding the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (see p. 805), the Com-
mission requested its Chairman to set up a group of statistical experts to prepare, in conjunction with UNDP, a report on the accuracy of the statistical information in the Report.

In relation to the planned work of the Statistics Division, the Commission took note of the draft medium-term plan for 2002-2005, the work programme for the biennium 2000-2001, the proposed 2000-2001 schedule of expert groups and workshops, and the activities to be undertaken under the Development Account in 2000 and 2001.

The Commission brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council actions taken or planned as a follow-up to requests made at the Council’s high-level and coordination segments and its 1999 resolutions, in particular the development of a multi-year programme of work for the Commission for the period 2000-2003.

By decision 2000/228 of 26 July, the Council took note of the Commission’s 2000 report, decided that the Commission’s thirty-second session should be held in New York from 6 to 9 March 2001 and approved the provisional agenda and documentation for that session.

**Economic statistics**

**National accounts**

The Statistical Commission had before it a report of the Secretary-General on the milestone assessment of the implementation of the 1993 SNA by Member States [E/CN.3/2000/3]. The report provided background information on the definition and measurement method of the milestones for implementation of the 1993 SNA; a summary table, by region, of the milestone assessment for member countries covering the period 1993-1998; a general analysis of the assessment results, as well as of the changes that occurred over the preceding three years; and a discussion of what the implementation of the 1993 SNA meant. Annexed to the report was a fact sheet on milestones.

The Commission, while recognizing that the milestone assessment based on the full implementation of the 1993 SNA provided useful information, emphasized the need for additional data, such as evaluation of timeliness, periodicity, direct measurement and conceptual adherence. It also noted that the current analysis showed a lack of progress in the implementation for a large number of countries that needed to be addressed.

The Commission also had before it the report of the 1999 meeting of the Task Force on National Accounts [E/CN.3/2000/2] [YUN 1999, p. 1194].

The Commission requested the high-level group of ISWGNA to reconsider if the current definition of implementation of the 1993 SNA was suitable for all countries and to determine whether a core set of accounts could be defined. It requested ISWGNA, at its April meeting, to consider the items discussed in the Commission with regard to future work on gross domestic product (GDP) volume measures and the link between national accounts data and employment, and to re-examine the mechanism for updating the 1993 SNA. The Commission further requested ISWGNA to continue to give special attention in its work programmes to the needs of the countries listed at milestone levels O and 1. The Statistics Netherlands initiative to host a workshop on GDP volume and price measurement, in cooperation with the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), was welcomed.

At its April 2000 meeting [E/CN.3/2001/7], the Task Force on National Accounts addressed issues raised by the Commission with respect to the current milestone assessment of countries and made proposals for an alternative approach. Included in the proposals was the identification of three main dimensions that needed to be examined or re-examined in order to better assess to what extent countries had implemented the 1993 SNA: the scope of the accounts; compliance with 1993 SNA concepts; and quality issues. The report also provided information on the frequency of updates; treatment of mobile phone licences; and topics that were candidates for updates of the 1993 SNA: the accrual accounting of interest; treatment of interest under conditions of high inflation; and the cost of transferring ownership of assets.

The Commission took note of the standard integrated presentation of the work programmes of ISWGNA in support of SNA implementation; information provided on handbooks and manuals being developed by "city groups" (see p. 1203); and reports on areas where further and/or new conceptual and methodological work was being carried out.

**International trade statistics**

Having considered the report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics [E/CN.3/2000/4], the Statistical Commission restated its request that the treatment of electronic commerce in international trade statistics be clarified, particularly in terms of its coverage and methods of data collection, and noted that the issue would be addressed at the next meeting of the Task Force and in the compilers' manual that was being prepared. It welcomed the data set of international trade statistics analysed according to the Central Product Classification (CPC) produced on a CD-ROM by the Statistics Division for test use by economists and statisticians and requested the
Division to provide user feedback as part of a review of the usefulness of CPC data for analytical purposes. The Commission expressed concern that the liberalization of trade and the consequent reduced incentive to secure accurate records of trade transactions could impact negatively on the quality of international trade statistics. It requested the Task Force to address the issue, to consider alternative sources of international trade statistics to supplement the customs-based data, and to reflect the outcomes in the compilers' manual.

Service statistics
The Commission had before it the report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services [E/CN.3/2000/5], which stated that the UN Statistics Division and IMF had circulated the draft manual on statistics of international trade in services to the statistical organizations of all Member countries for a worldwide review.

The Commission welcomed the substantial progress made on the manual, noting that it provided a useful framework for guiding future work in a new area of statistics. It noted, however, that the information on extended balance-of-payments classification of services required more detail than most statistical offices could provide and also required careful consideration of the way in which resident and non-resident definitions were utilized in the description of services traded. The Commission suggested that, in practice, trade in services data might be collected by national offices at a more aggregated level.

Finance statistics
In its report on its 1999 meeting (Basel, Switzerland, 17-18 June) [E/CN.3/2000/6], the Task Force on Finance Statistics stated that it had drawn up an outline for revised and expanded guidelines on external debt statistics for compilers and users. The Statistical Commission supported the Task Force's work, in particular that on further developing creditor-side data. It noted that obtaining quality data from financial institutions was essential for that work and that implementing disclosure standards might be an important prerequisite.

International Comparison Programme
In response to a 1999 Statistical Commission request [YUN 1999, p. 1195], the World Bank submitted a report on measures to improve the effectiveness of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) [E/CN.3/2000/7], which was a follow-up to a 1999 consultant's evaluation [YUN 1999, p. 1195]. The report reviewed the objectives of the organizational structure and output of ICP, highlighted areas where significant progress had been made in addressing issues raised in the consultant's evaluation, flagged areas where further progress could be made and outlined practical steps towards addressing outstanding issues.

The Commission noted the support of many countries and international agencies for a viable ICP and the efforts made by the international and supranational agencies to address their reservations. It suggested steps to be taken regarding the reservations on quality, timeliness, credibility and transparency of ICP, as identified in reports of consultants, and recommended that the next round of the global ICP be postponed by at least one year so that the suggested steps could be implemented.

The Commission empowered the Chairman to constitute a group of friends to review the implementation plan and to report back to the Commission's 2001 session.

SDDS and GDDS
The Statistical Commission had before it an IMF report on the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), and issues of data quality [E/CN.3/2000/8], which described the strengthening of SDDS in the wake of recent financial crises, the application of the data dissemination standards, data quality and the status of GDDS.

The Commission welcomed the response of the IMF Statistics Department to its 1999 request to enhance the consultation process [YUN 1999, p. 1192], and acknowledged the contribution made by SDDS to the improvement of data in the economic and financial area. It re-emphasized the importance of early involvement of national statistical agencies in the further development of SDDS and GDDS; stressed the need for effective partnerships at the national level between statistical agencies, central banks and ministries of finance for the successful implementation of the dissemination standards; expressed its concern about the planned extension of SDDS, noting that there was an opportunity cost in terms of the further development of other data systems; and stressed the need for priorities and a certain degree of flexibility when implementing the standards.

The Commission also welcomed the debate on data quality stimulated by IMF, invited IMF to build on existing experiences and expertise in countries and regions, and asked IMF to take the outcomes of the data quality debate into account when SDDS was being reviewed in the future. The
Statistics Commission also stressed the importance of continuous dialogue between producers of statistics and policy makers, agreed on the need for further capacity-building and resources for the implementation of the standards, and welcomed IMF's intention to integrate GDDS into its regular technical cooperation programme.

Other economic statistics

City groups

The city group report described the meetings, activities and future work of the Canberra (Australia) Group on Household Income Statistics; the Delhi (India) Group on Informal Sector Statistics; the Expert Group on Capital Stock Statistics; the Ottawa (Canada) Group on Price Indexes; the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation; the Round Table on Business Survey Frames; and the Voorburg (Netherlands) Group on Service Statistics.

The Commission welcomed the progress made by the groups, reiterated the importance of making information about the groups widely available and encouraged them to publish their documents on the Internet. It suggested that the Ottawa Group consider the implications of the increase in e-commerce on price indicators and invited the Voorburg Group to address the difficulties that developing countries encountered when attempting to collect data on the services sector.

With regard to the report of the Expert Group on Intangibles, the Commission noted that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) would continue its work on intangible assets and the information economy but decided that such work should no longer be reported to the Commission under the city group agenda item.

IWGPS
The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (IWGPS) met several times, formally and informally, during 2000 to review progress on the preparation of the manuals on consumer price indices (CPI) and on producer price indices (PPI) [E/CN.3/2001/12]. There was agreement on a common outline for the two manuals and free exchange of information and relevant texts between the two processes; draft chapters had been prepared and the editing process had been established. The technical expert group on PPI held its second meeting in Madrid, Spain, in September, when first drafts of seven chapters of the PPI manual were reviewed.

The Statistical Commission encouraged the inclusion in the manual on CPI of technical guidelines for implementation.

Tourism satellite account
The Statistical Commission had before it the report of the World Tourism Organization on the tourism satellite account (TSA) and related methodological outputs [E/CN.3/2000/11]; the draft TSA [PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/80]; and the draft update of the UN/World Tourism Organization Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, including the provisional list of tourism-specific products [PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1].

The report presented the statistical design of a TSA and an update of Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, and described the process that had been followed in developing those products, including by the Enzo Paci World Conference on the Measurement of the Economic Impact of Tourism (Nice, France, 15-18 June 1999).

The Commission adopted the methodological references to the draft TSA, as amended, and requested the World Tourism Organization, OECD and Eurostat to make the approved changes and include in the draft TSA the list of tourism-specific products contained in the draft update of Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, and to publish the document as soon as possible in cooperation with the Statistics Division. Although the Commission welcomed the draft update of Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, reflecting the changes necessary for consistency with the TSA, the 1993 SNA and the fifth edition of the IMF Balance of Payments, including the list of tourism-specific products contained in the draft update, it deferred detailed consideration pending further consultations and review by the World Tourism Organization. It requested that organization, OECD and Eurostat to continue their cooperation in the field and to provide consistent technical advice and data requests to countries. It welcomed ILO's offer to present, at the Commission's 2001 session, a report on its work on developing a labour statistics supplement to the TSA.

Environment statistics
The Commission had before it the report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting [E/CN.3/2000/12], which summarized progress on the revision of the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) and presented the planned future work programme.
The Commission welcomed the proposed extensive consultation process with the international community during the revision of SEEA, and recommended that the handbook on integrated environmental and economic accounting be submitted to it for approval at its 2001 session, while noting that due to time constraints the document would be available in English only.

### Social statistics

The Siena Group for Social Statistics (Maastricht, Netherlands, 22-24 May) [E/CN.3/2001/5] discussed the theme "Accounting in social statistics and indicators for social development".

### Gender issues

The Commission had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation plan of a project on gender issues in the measurement of paid and unpaid work [E/CN.3/2000/13], which described the rationale and objectives of the project and its major expected outputs. The project was developed with UNDP and the International Development Research Centre (Canada). The report was in follow-up to a recommendation contained in the 1995 Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women [YUN 1995, p. 1169] regarding the need to improve data collection on the full contribution of women and men to the economy, including in the informal sector.

The Commission recognized the importance of the work on the measurement of paid and unpaid work by the Secretariat as set out in the report, and noted the additional related work being carried out by various countries and agencies, particularly on time-use surveys.

### Development indicators

The Commission had before it a report of the Secretary-General on the harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the UN system [E/CN.3/2000/15], which described the Statistics Division’s activities in support of the two-day informal meeting of the Economic and Social Council in 1999 on basic indicators for the informal sector. The Commission recognized the importance of the work on the measurement of paid and unpaid work by the Secretariat as set out in the report, and noted the additional related work being carried out by various countries and agencies, particularly on time-use surveys.

The Commission welcomed the proposed extensive consultation process with the international community during the revision of SEEA, and recommended that the handbook on integrated environmental and economic accounting be submitted to it for approval at its 2001 session, while noting that due to time constraints the document would be available in English only.

### International economic and social classifications

The Commission had before it a report of the Secretary-General on international economic and social classifications [E/CN.3/2000/17], which provided an overview of how the Commission's 1999 recommendations concerning international statistical classifications [YUN 1999, p. 1197] had been addressed. Annexed to the report were the conclusions of a meeting of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications and the summary action plan of the newly formed Technical Subgroup for updating and future revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification.

The Commission endorsed the recommendations for future work on ISIC, as outlined in the report of the Expert Group, and noted that the concerns raised regarding the appropriate level of detail of an international classification were determined by the need to allow for international
comparison at aggregated levels, as well as the need for detailed development of national classifications. It also noted that a two-digit ISIC with regional adaptations could possibly serve those needs and referred the matter to the Expert Group for further consideration.

The Commission recommended that the definition and use of alternate aggregations in ISIC receive more attention as a way to satisfy analytical needs of users, emphasized the need for training materials and noted the already existing support of Member countries in that field. The Commission also noted that during the revision process of ISIC, more attention should be given to the definition and use of statistical units and the definition of core units as building blocks, and that, although currently focused on economic classifications, the Expert Group could also bring items relating to social classifications to the attention of the Commission. It further noted the Statistics Division’s ongoing efforts to make crucial information and materials available on the Internet.

**Other statistical activities**

In reviewing other major developments in the work programme of the Statistics Division, the Commission took note of the draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 [E/CN.3/2000/CRP.1], the proposed schedule of expert groups and workshops [E/CN.3/2000/L.4] and the activities to be undertaken under the Development Account [A/53/374/Add.1].

**Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes**

Having considered the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its 1999 session [YUN 1999, p. 1197] and the report of the Secretary-General on the global integrated presentation of the work of the international organizations in statistical methodology [E/CN.3/2000/20], the Commission took note of the latter report and welcomed the cooperative and supportive action that had been taken by ECE, OECD and Eurostat in the context of the Conference of European Statisticians’ integrated presentation of statistical work in that region.

**Inter-agency cooperation**

The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, at its thirty-fourth session (Washington, D.C., 20-22 September) [ACC/2000/16], noted, among other things, the outcome of the International Statistical Institute conference on measurement of electronic commerce (Singapore, 6-8 December 1999), agreeing that e-commerce provided challenges to statisticians in concepts, definitions and data collection. The Subcommittee also took note of the work being undertaken on the development indicators web page; recognized the importance of user/producer dialogues and requested the Statistics Division to explore the use of the existing General Assembly panel series in the promotion of dialogues; and expressed concern that OECD had issued the publication Measuring the Role of Tourism in OECD Economies: The OECD Manual on Tourism Satellite Accounts and Employment without sufficient references to the forthcoming joint UN/OECD/Eurostat/World Tourism Organization "TSA: Methodological References", which had been adopted with certain modifications by the Statistical Commission in March (see p. 1203).