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**SESSION II: REGIONS, STATES AND FEDERATIONS: PROBLEMS OF  
VARIABLE GEOGRAPHY**

**PROBLEMS OF CHANGING GEOGRAPHY**

Report submitted by the Austrian Central Statistical Office \*

Summary

1. The political developments of the past decade have had their influence on the territorial foundations of statistics. An examination of the problems involved with such changes of the basic geographical conditions seems desirable.
2. Increasingly, the term "area" is defined by functions and activities. Expanding economic networks and mobility transgressing borders make the new spatial concepts up-to-date. Therefore, conventions and agreements gain more and more importance in defining the term "area" and providing the relevant data structures.
3. Of the diverse spatial concepts, the territorial one seems to be best suited to extensive application. Area as territory is closely linked with

\*/ Prepared by Mr. Erich Bader, President.

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political aspects, since the relationships between sovereignty and citizen is determined by different forms of institutions as well as by manifestations of legal norms, which also contribute to the internal breakdown in regions.

4. Everything gets more complicated as soon as functional interdependences or functionally defined regions should be examined, as these are not necessarily based on administrative boundaries. They are temporally variable and, therefore, subject to permanent changes and redefinitions, or simply deliberately kept variable. With reference to these regions, the demands made on regional statistics are not so much of a descriptive but of a scientific nature.

5. The use of institutional statistical units, which is closely connected with the political administrative system of references, ensures a minimum of time consistency with regard to the analysed phenomena, and, at the same time, guarantees that the subjects to be examined can be analysed. Comparisons of political and administrative institutional reference systems require their adaptation and restriction to actually observable phenomena ("hard facts").

6. The problems alluded to will best be met with a uniform and internationally standardized system of regional statistical components.

7. This is the very achievement of the system of a European territorial breakdown (NUTS-nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques). By concentrating on institutional administrative territorial units, it has created an effective basic structure covering areas for regional statistics.

8. The development of an extensive data base as the foundation of territorial statistics seems the only way of an ex ante "immunisation" of statistics against the territorial changes of states and their regions but also against the confederation of individual states.

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