

First of all, we have seen that this information, particularly with respect to statistics, is of very uneven quality. The quarterly statistics I mentioned — and some annual statistics, for that matter — lack a great deal in precision. This is the first problem, which also applies to the articles of which I spoke. This lack of precision often means that it is difficult for our representatives to know exactly what the various statistics relate to and even more difficult to compare them, with the added complication of variations in the bases for the calculations.

Another problem is the time-lapse. For example, the annual foreign-trade statistics for 1975 did not become available until late in 1976. Are such delays truly unavoidable?

For the moment, I shall leave it at that so far as statistics are concerned. The real difficulty is that, despite the efforts which may have been made in this field, our representatives — both official and others — regret the lack of dependable, coherent and complete statistics, available within reasonable time-limits.

Another field in which our representatives find inadequacies is that of projections and forecasting — the future, in short — and you can see how important it is for businessmen to be able to get a fairly precise idea of the outlook. Finally, the last shortcoming to which I wish to draw your attention is the lack of directories with the names and telephone numbers of various organizations and of the officials in these organizations whom foreign businessmen or their official agents may contact. This may seem a small thing, but our representatives consider the lack of such a directory a real handicap, and I would like to point out that one paragraph of the section we are discussing relates specifically to this kind of information.

I am coming to the third category I mentioned, in which one has the impression of large shadowy areas and in which the inadequacy of economic and business information is the first obstacle encountered. Bulgaria may be used as an example in this respect. As it happens, the distinguished representative of Bulgaria spoke a few moments ago and I listened with interest to his remarks. I shall, therefore, not bore you with the details of the points discussed by other delegations, which I was going to speak on at greater length. The fact remains that the two major publications, the statistical yearbook and the foreign-trade yearbook, are late in appearing. The fact is that they are published in insufficient number — 900 copies of the foreign-trade statistics, they say. That is very few and the problem is not simplified by the fact that this publication is apparently not available through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am stating these facts, Mr Chairman, because they have been reported to us by our representatives as significant for our trade relations