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(a) 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme

DRAFT PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

Further to Economic and Social Council resolution 1947 (LVIII), entitled "1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme", and to the discussions of the Statistical Commission at its eighteenth and nineteenth sessions, the draft recommendations for population and housing censuses are before the Commission.

The present document contains background information on the development of the draft recommendations and a progress report on the activities of the Statistical Office relating to census staffing and cost requirements, the elimination of sex-based stereotypes in census and related statistics and the development of local-area statistics programmes in connexion with censuses. The draft recommendations themselves will be found in documents E/CN.3/515/Add.1 (Part One, Operational aspects of population and housing censuses), E/CN.3/515/Add.2 (Part Two, Topics and tabulations for population censuses), and E/CN.3/515/Add.3 (Part Three, Topics and tabulations for housing censuses).

The Commission may wish to adopt the draft principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses and request the Secretary-General to publish and distribute them to countries as a guide to their census activities.

Note: For technical reasons, these draft principles and recommendations are being issued as four documents. The present document contains the introduction; Part One (Operational aspects of population and housing censuses), Part Two (Topics and tabulations for population censuses) and Part Three (Topics and tabulations for housing censuses) will appear in documents E/CN.3/515/Add.1, Add.2 and Add.3 respectively.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	3
I. ACTION BY THE COMMISSION	4	3
II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	5 - 15	4
III. REPORTS ON SOME RELATED ACTIVITIES	16 - 27	6
A. A study of census staffing and cost requirements	16 - 20	6
B. Elimination of sex-based stereotypes from population census and related statistics	21 - 24	7
C. The development of local-area statistics programmes in connexion with population and housing censuses	25 - 27	8

INTRODUCTION

1. At its nineteenth session the Statistical Commission, "noting that, in accordance with the Commission's decision at its eighteenth session, the Secretary-General planned to convene an interregional expert group to consider draft international recommendations for the 1980 population and housing censuses - drawing, as appropriate, on the 1970 world and regional census recommendations, regional recommendations developed for the 1980 censuses, the views expressed by the Commission at its current session and other relevant materials ... requested the Secretary-General to circulate those draft recommendations widely, as soon as possible after the meeting of the expert group, for the information of countries in their census activities, and to submit final draft recommendations to the Commission for consideration at its twentieth session ...". ^{1/} Add.1-3 to the present document contain the final draft recommendations for population and housing censuses as requested by the Commission.

2. The present document contains background information on the development of ^{the} draft recommendations and a report on the activities of the Statistical Office relating to (a) a study of census staffing and cost requirements, (b) the elimination of sex-based stereotypes in census and related statistics and (c) the development of local-area statistics programmes in connexion with the census.

3. If the Commission approves the draft recommendations, relevant portions of the background information presented in the present document will be adapted to constitute a preface to the published recommendations.

I. ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

4. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Adopt the draft principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses contained in documents E/CN.3/515/Addenda 1-3, modified, as required, in accordance with its discussions and conclusions and with the addition of a preface giving background information;

(b) Request the Secretary-General to publish the principles and recommendations, as modified, and distribute them widely as a guide to countries in their national population and housing census activities;

(c) Comment on the other activities described in the present document.

^{1/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5910), para. 54 (b).

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Commission first considered revision of the recommendations for the 1970 population censuses 2/ and the recommendations for the 1970 housing censuses 3/ at its eighteenth session, in 1974. At that time, the Commission "accepted the proposal that the regional commissions should take the lead in developing recommendations for the 1980 census programme, particularly with respect to the topics to be covered, while the Statistical Office would attempt to compile and analyse material on national census experience relating to the organization, timing, staffing and costs of various census operations, with a view to preparing appropriate guidelines and recommendations on these matters ..." 4/ Furthermore, the Commission decided that there should be an interim report on the subject at its nineteenth session, in 1976, and that it should receive final consideration at its twentieth session. Also, the Commission unanimously approved a draft resolution (1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme) subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council, with some addition, as resolution 1947 (LVIII), inter alia recommending "that Member States undertake to carry out population and housing censuses during the period 1975-1984 and that they take into account international recommendations relating to population and housing censuses ..."

6. At its nineteenth session, the Commission considered an interim report on the census recommendations (E/CN.3/480) and requested the Secretary-General to circulate a part of the report, amended to reflect the Commission's views, for the consideration of Member States in planning their censuses. 5/ Accordingly, the "Interim report on the United Nations recommendations for the 1980 population and housing censuses" (ST/ESA/STAT/91) was issued in June 1977 and given wide circulation.

7. Taking into account the interim views expressed by the Statistical Commission at its nineteenth session and the views expressed by the Population Commission at its nineteenth session, 6/ as well as the views of the regional commissions and of the Inter-American Statistical Institute expressed in connexion with the various regional meetings on the census programme, 7/ the Statistical Office prepared a set of draft recommendations, which were submitted to the Expert Group on Global Recommendations for the 1980 Population and Housing Censuses, which met at United Nations Headquarters from 16-24 January 1978.

2/ Principles and Recommendations for the 1970 Population Censuses (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.67.XVII.3).

3/ Principles and Recommendations for the 1970 Housing Censuses (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.67.XVII.4).

4/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5603), para. 58.

5/ Ibid., Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5910), para. 54 (a).

6/ Ibid., Supplement No. 4 (E/5913), paras. 230-239.

7/ See the citations in foot-notes b-f of annex II of E/CN.3/515/Add.1 and Add.2.

8. After providing detailed comments and suggestions for revision, the Expert Group concluded that it "considered that the draft recommendations for population and housing censuses, amended in the light of its comments, were suitable for submission to the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session. It also considered that the draft recommendations, as so revised, were suitable for circulation to countries, particularly developing countries, to assist them in planning for their forthcoming population and housing censuses." 8/

9. The present draft recommendations are therefore a second draft, reflecting the comments of the Expert Group. In accordance with the request of the Commission at its nineteenth session (see para. 1 above), the present document and Add.1-3 have already been circulated widely to Member States and others.

10. The present draft recommendations differ from the recommendations adopted in connexion with the 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programmes in four major respects. First, the recommendations for both population and housing censuses are contained in a single volume, as appropriate to a combined programme, rather than being treated in two separate volumes as was the case in the previous decade. The combined document implements the decision made by the Commission in connexion with the draft resolution for ECOSOC that it proposed at its eighteenth session (see para. 5 above) that the programmes for the two censuses be combined.

11. Secondly, the draft recommendations omit in the title any reference to a specific year. It will be recalled that the titles of the recommendations adopted in the previous decade made specific reference to 1970. The decision to omit a reference to any specific year reflects the move away from an emphasis on international simultaneity in census taking, as reflected in decisions of the Statistical Commission at its eighteenth session. It also brings the treatment of the population and housing census recommendations in line with that of United Nations recommendations in most other fields of statistics, which remain in force until the Statistical Commission considers that revisions are warranted. Future revisions would be distinguished as Rev. 1, Rev. 2, etc.

12. Thirdly, the chapters of the principles and recommendations dealing with the operational aspects of the population and housing censuses (Part One) have been substantially revised and expanded to reflect recent technical and policy developments related to census taking. In addition, a large number of revisions have been introduced in an effort to make these portions of the recommendations more directly oriented towards the needs and circumstances of developing countries.

13. Fourthly, with respect to census content (Parts Two and Three), a number of basic decisions had to be made in order to ensure that the global recommendations would complement and not supersede those made at the regional level. In considering this problem, the Statistical Office was guided by the Expert Group, which "agreed that several different approaches could be taken in implementing the mandate of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations that the regional commissions should

8/ "Report of the Expert Group on Global Recommendations for the 1980 Population and Housing Censuses" (ESA/STAT/AC.6), para. 127.

take the lead in the determination of topics and tabulations and that the international recommendations should complement the regional recommendations." 9/

14. The Expert Group considered that the draft recommendations should distinguish among (a) those topics recommended as priority topics by a majority of the regions, (b) those topics that, while not falling in group (a), were included by a majority of the regions when both priority and "other useful" topics were taken into consideration and (c) those topics that, while not falling into either of the preceding groups, were mentioned in the recommendations of at least one region. The Expert Group agreed that "the lists of topics included in groups (a) and (b) should be shown in the body of the draft recommendations with definitions and specifications provided at least for all topics thus shown. The list of topics included in group (c) should be presented as an annex to the document." 10/ The Statistical Office has followed this procedure in Parts Two and Three of the draft recommendations.

15. Despite these differences, there is considerable continuity between the present draft recommendations and those adopted by the Commission for the 1970 census programmes, particularly with respect to census content. Indeed, the Commission, at its nineteenth session, had already noted that "there was an emerging consensus that the recommendations on census content adopted for the 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programmes and their regional variants remained largely valid for the 1980 Programme." 11/

III. REPORTS ON SOME RELATED ACTIVITIES

A. A study of census staffing and cost requirements

16. Relatively few countries have undertaken systematic studies of the financial and other resource needs of statistical activities, including population censuses, and there has been almost no work on this topic in the past at the international level. The subject is clearly a complex one - hampered by the lack of data, by the usual pitfalls of cost comparisons between countries and by the great variations among countries in census content and operations.

17. Nevertheless, the effective and efficient management of a large statistical undertaking, such as a population and housing census, requires a considerable body of detailed data on its resource needs (in terms of personnel, equipment, space, supplies, finances, etc.). Indeed, a number of countries taking their first population census, or without a well-established tradition for census-taking and lacking a permanent census organization have been severely hampered by the absence of such data in developing realistic budgets and in planning and managing their censuses. Even in countries with a well-established census tradition,

9/ Ibid., para. 43.

10/ Ibid., para. 46.

11/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5910), para. 40.

statistical offices sometimes find themselves in protracted discussions with national funding bodies over the new census budget because of the lack of data on the cost of different operations in the previous census. Because of the importance of this subject, the Statistical Commission, at its eighteenth session, requested the Statistical Office to provide guidance on it as part of the preparations for the 1980 World Census Programme.

18. Accordingly, the Office requested and, after some delay, received support from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities to carry out a special project to study census staffing and cost requirements. With this support, it has been possible to recruit a senior staff person to develop a comprehensive questionnaire on the subject, which was sent to a large but selected group of countries. Responses from approximately 50 countries have been received to date and the analysis of the results is well under way. The results will appear both in technical reports and in the appropriate parts of the Handbook of Population and Housing Census Methods.

19. Work so far accomplished on this study has already benefited the draft recommendations for population and housing censuses, in particular Part One, dealing with the operational aspects of the censuses.

20. To deal with the difficulties inherent in any comparative study of costs of a complex process, such as a census, two strategies are being used in the collection of information and in the analysis. First, data on resources in physical terms (for example, work-days or months, space, vehicles used, etc.) were sought and are being used in the analysis along with financial data. Secondly, both in data collection and in analysis, attention has been given to individual components of the census in addition to the entire operation.

B. Elimination of sex-based stereotypes from population census and related statistics

21. At its nineteenth session, the Commission "agreed that all possible precautions should be taken so that the use of concepts or methods involving sex-based stereotypes would not prejudice census results". ^{12/} Several paragraphs of the document "Interim report on the United Nations recommendations for the 1980 population and housing censuses", circulated to Member States in 1977, dealt with this issue. ^{13/} The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 2061 (LXII), noted "the action initiated by the Statistical Commission at its nineteenth session in November 1976 in planning for the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme and efforts under way to encourage needed revisions in the basic concepts used for the collection and compilation of economic, demographic and social statistics so as to free them from sex-based stereotypes", and requested "the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session, as a contribution to the

^{12/} Ibid., para. 48.

^{13/} ST/ESA/STAT/91, paras. 26-29.

success of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, 1976-1985, to continue its action in co-operation with national statistical offices, regional commissions and intergovernmental organizations, organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, especially the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations ...¹⁷

22. In developing the draft recommendations for population and housing censuses, the Statistical Office has taken into account the views expressed by the Economic and Social Council and the Statistical Commission on the elimination of sex-based stereotypes from the census results. In particular, paragraphs 68 and 69 of Part Two, dealing with the relationship to the head (or other reference person) of the household and paragraph 190 of Part Two, dealing with economic activity, contain a discussion of problems frequently encountered in obtaining data free from sex-based stereotypes.

23. The Statistical Office has engaged the services of a consultant to prepare a report reviewing the primary problems encountered by national statistical offices in meeting the needs of users for statistics better oriented to examining the role and status of women and providing information on the solutions that have been developed or are being tested to deal with these problems. To these ends, the consultant has visited a large number of national statistical offices and several of the regional commissions and specialized agencies as well as a number of institutions and individuals interested in using population census and related official statistics to examine issues related to the role and status of women and in ensuring that these statistics were free of sex-based stereotypes.

24. It is anticipated that a report based on the consultant's work will be circulated before the end of 1978 to national statistical offices, regional commissions, specialized agencies and others for comments. Depending upon the comments received and the availability of resources, consideration will be given to convening an expert group on this subject involving producers of statistics and concerned users and to publishing a revision of the report as a technical report.

C. The development of local-area statistics programmes in connexion with population and housing censuses

25. In many countries, increasing emphasis is being placed on the need for data at the subnational level for planning and development purposes. The important role that the population and housing census must play in responding to this need is widely recognized.

26. As part of the preparatory work for the 1980 World Census Programme, the Statistical Office engaged the services of a consultant to prepare a report giving general guidance on the development of local-area statistics programmes. The

report focuses on the needs of developing countries and on the cartographic work required in connexion with the census to ensure that the needed data can be produced quickly and cheaply.

27. It is planned that a technical report based on this study will be issued in 1978. In addition, elements of this report have already been incorporated into the draft census recommendations, in particular, in paragraphs 82-90 of Part One.
