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Demographic and social statistics: population and housing censuses

Population and housing censuses

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Statistical Commission in accordance with a request of the Commission at its thirty-fifth session.¹ It presents a discussion of the activities completed in response to the actions taken by the Commission at its thirty-fifth session in regard to establishing an expert group to set census priorities, developing a well-structured web site to ensure the exchange of census data and experiences, and providing the foundation for the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, including drafting a resolution in that regard.

Points for action by the Commission are presented in paragraph 32.

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 4 (E/2004/24 and Corr.1)*, chap. II, para. 2 (b).

* E/CN.3/2005/1.

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Introduction

1. The present report of the Secretary-General summarizes the activities of the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the regional commissions in the area of population and housing censuses that were completed in response to the decisions taken by the Commission at its thirty-fifth session under the agenda item entitled "Demographic and social statistics".¹ More specifically, the Commission requested a range of activities to ensure the success of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses, such as establishing an expert group to set census priorities, developing a well-structured web site to ensure the exchange of census data and experiences, and providing the foundation for the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, including drafting a resolution in that regard.

I. Setting up the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

2. For over six decades, the Statistical Commission and regional statistical committees have played a key role in supporting national census-taking. The Commission established the 1950 and 1960 World Population Census Programmes which were followed by the 1970, 1980 and 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programmes. These initiatives undertaken by the Commission were then followed by the initiation in 1994 of a 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme in support of census-taking worldwide. These most recent actions taken by the Commission were reflected in a resolution by the Economic and Social Council in support of the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme (resolution 1995/7).

3. Under the various mandates of the World Programmes during the period 1995-2000, the United Nations Statistics Division as secretariat of the Statistical Commission, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), has played a key role in the coordination of the World Programmes, in the preparation of principles and recommendations, in the setting of standards and methods, in the dissemination of census results through the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* database system, and in the provision of technical cooperation for census operations.

4. International funding organizations such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and other international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, have supported the conducting of censuses through the provision of funds, loans, and technical assistance. Their help has been instrumental in the success of the World Programmes.

5. As part of the World Programme, standards and methods of census taking were prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division. The most current version of *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*² provides agreed definitions, concepts and harmonized procedures for census-taking. A series

of Handbooks were also prepared and will need updating based upon experiences of the previous decade (a list of currently existing census handbooks is provided to the Statistical Commission as a background document).

6. The regional commissions participated actively in this process, in partnership with Member States, to ensure that the regional dimension was taken into account. ECE, in particular, has in the past five decades prepared a regional version of census recommendations that is traditionally geared to the circumstances and needs of statistically advanced countries. The 2000 version of the ECE census recommendations³ was endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians in 1997 and was widely used in the 2000 round of censuses as reference by many countries in the ECE and other regions.

7. The United Nations Statistics Division is initiating the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, to be implemented from 2005 to 2014. The goal of the World Programme is for all countries and areas to agree on a set of accepted international principles and recommendations governing the conduct of censuses; to conduct a census during the period 2005-2014; and to disseminate census results in a timely manner. In order to succeed, the World Programme requires the active support of Member States in a working partnership with the United Nations, its regional commissions and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. For this reason, the Statistical Commission is now considering a draft resolution in support of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme covering the census years 2005-2014.

8. The implementation of the World Programme will be facilitated by the establishment of a Trust Fund for Population and Housing Censuses coordinated by the United Nations Statistics Division. The Trust Fund would be used to bridge the distances between national statistical offices in their exchange of resources and support, by providing the funds needed for travel, consultation, fellowships and advisory work, as well as for research and development of standards and methods necessary for the successful implementation of the World Programme. The proposal for a Trust Fund has also been noted and supported by the recently held International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results as part of the Marrakech Action Plan.⁴

9. The regional dimension of the World Programme will be ensured through coordination with the activities promoted in the area of population and housing censuses by the regional commissions. In particular, the World Programme will include the activities currently being carried out by ECE, in partnership with Member States, to develop the 2010 revision of the Recommendations for the Censuses of Population and Housing in the ECE Region. Simultaneously, ECLAC is initiating a series of meetings to identify regional priorities for population and housing censuses. ESCAP has already organized the first meeting focusing on regional aspects of population and housing censuses.

10. The Statistical Commission, in its deliberations, has considered three broad types of statistical activities as interrelated and essential for the study of population and housing, namely, (a) activities related to population and housing censuses; (b) household surveys; and (c) administrative registers.

11. It is both efficient and effective to integrate the basic national survey needs of a country with census planning. Both surveys and censuses are linked at the national

and international levels by requirements for common definitions, concepts, classifications and tabulation programmes so that they may together fully meet programme and policy requirements for standardized and comparable information.

12. New and more complex approaches to census implementation and survey planning abound. In a number of countries, the long forms of censuses are being replaced with surveys that are conducted separately, but linked to the census, during the intercensal period. In other cases, surveys and various sets of national administrative records have been linked to obtain data that have traditionally been collected in a population census. In any case, to be implemented, the linking of information from these complex data sets requires common concepts and definitions, and tabulation plans.

13. The United Nations Statistics Division is working on ways to harmonize the statistics derived from these three critical types of activities. In this process, it will seek agreement among census and survey statisticians from national and international statistical offices on common standards and methods. An international expert group is being formed to focus on critical issues related to planning the next decade's round of population and housing censuses (2005-2014).⁵ In particular, it will work on a strategy to evaluate alternative approaches to censuses, such as community surveys, population registers, and rolling censuses, for their effectiveness and efficiency under different national conditions.

14. The role of Member States in the setting of standards; in data collection and dissemination; and in the provision of technical advisory services, is crucial. The United Nations Statistics Division stands ready to provide secretariat support to this initiative of active involvement of Member States, under the auspices of the Statistical Commission.

15. The draft resolution calls upon Member States to participate in the World Programme and to support the conduct of censuses around the world. This could be achieved through the supply and exchange of expertise and information and other resources required. Member States' involvement in, and support of, the World Programme are needed early in the upcoming decade, owing to the number of incoming requests by countries for immediate advice on alternative census designs that may be tried for the purpose of increasing effectiveness and efficiency in the gathering of population and housing information, as well as for reducing costs and shortening the time between data collection and dissemination.

16. It is important that there be a coordinated exchange of technical expertise and scientific research among countries early on in the upcoming decade, so that newly agreed standards and methods approved by the Statistical Commission and the Conference of European Statisticians are properly supported by technical services to countries for their implementation and use.

17. As it is also essential to address the needs of countries in especially difficult circumstances that either have failed to conduct their censuses in the last decade, or have conducted them but have not fully tabulated and disseminated the data therefrom, one sub-component of the larger World Programme and the working partnership would be focused on this specific issue. In this respect, the regional commissions can play an important role, for instance, through the promotion of specific initiatives at the subregional or national level.

18. A coordinated plan of work would need to be carried out under the auspices of the Statistical Commission. The United Nations Statistics Division, as secretariat of the Commission, in cooperation with the regional commissions, would coordinate activities of Member States leading to the increased exchange of ideas, equipment, advice, technical support, professional expertise and other required resources necessary for the completion of national population and housing censuses. Coordinated activities would lead to an increased sharing of information technology expertise; the short-term exchange of professionals such as sampling specialists, geographical information specialists, specialists in using administrative data in statistics, and other experts needed to resolve immediate problems that Member States confront in the planning and conducting of censuses; and the sharing of training programmes and training materials for improvement of concepts, definitions, questionnaires, classifications, coding practices and the like. These may also result in the sharing of census information, data reviews and data exchange through a coordinated programme of work. As partners, Member States will both provide and receive scientific and technical expertise and information and reach agreement on ways to further harmonize and utilize census results.

19. At the global level in the reporting period, the United Nations Statistics Division undertook two major steps in regard to the 2010 World Programme: it conducted the United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses and the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses.

20. The United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses was conducted in New York on 13 and 14 September 2004.⁶ It defined a range of activities relevant to the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme; identified specific issues and areas warranting further actions based on the experiences and lessons learned from the 2000 census decade (see annex I); set priorities for the Expert Group to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses; and provided inputs for the drafting of a resolution for consideration by the Statistical Commission with respect to the development of the 2010 World Programme (see annex II).

21. The United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses was held in New York from 15 to 17 September 2004.⁷ It produced a set of recommendations and conclusions (see annex III) in regard to technical and scientific aspects of emerging issues and topics, such as alternative census designs, core national data sets and updating and revising the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses; and also established terms of reference outlining the role of the Expert Group in relation to the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (see annex IV).

22. In emphasizing the need to ensure the success of the next round of census-taking, the Symposium and the Expert Group call upon the Statistical Commission to submit for adoption to the Economic and Social Council a resolution on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. The resolution calls upon all Member States, inter alia, to hold a population and housing census at least once in the period 2005-2014.

23. In addition, the United Nations Statistics Division and the regional commissions undertook a set of activities in response to the decisions of the

Statistical Commission at its thirty-fifth session. Specifically, the Statistics Division has established, as part of the dissemination programme for the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*, a well-structured web site to ensure effective exchange of census data and information and has made national population estimates and vital statistics downloadable via the Internet free of charge.⁸ The purpose of the web site is to provide a platform for disseminating social and demographic data, available in the Statistics Division, as well as linking the work of various organizations and agencies of the United Nations system within the given constructs of demographic and social statistics. The web site provides information on four major sources of activity, namely, demographic and social concerns; sources of data; standards and methods; and statistical products and databases.

24. The United Nations Statistics Division is increasing the use of the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system in reporting demographic and social data and ensuring the international exchange of census data, including their use for the preparation of the publication entitled *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*.

25. The United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Ghana Statistical Service, conducted a United Nations Workshop on Improving Statistics on Fertility, Mortality and Disability in Africa from 14 to 18 June 2004 in Accra. The workshop reviewed procedures for obtaining the above statistics by maximizing the use of multiple data sources, with a special emphasis on censuses, and proposed strategies of improving civil registration in the region.

26. The activities of the regional commissions during the reporting period are summarized below. Available reports on these activities are submitted as background documents to the Statistical Commission.

27. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has reported that currently it does not undertake activities directly related to population and housing censuses.

28. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) are jointly working on the preparation of a new set of "Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing in the ECE Region" to be finalized in 2006. A Steering Group has identified selected areas of the ECE Recommendations that require revision, and has proposed adding a new, expanded section on census methodology and technology. A first discussion on the structure and the main directions of the updated census recommendations took place at two joint ECE/Eurostat Work Sessions on Population and Housing Censuses, Geneva, November 2004. Based on the results of these discussions, a first draft of the new Recommendations is expected to be prepared in the course of 2005 and further discussed at another ECE/Eurostat meeting in November 2005.

29. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organized a seminar on the lessons learned from the 2000 round of population and housing censuses in Latin American, in December 2003 in Santiago, Chile. Over 50 professionals from 16 countries discussed census-related issues including: census organization, coverage, cartography, training, and use of sampling, new technologies, data processing, and characteristics of dwellings, households and persons. The outcomes of this seminar and a survey will be published in late 2004. Among the most important issues raised at the seminar include: difficulties in financing census operations, and the need for more frequent data at local levels and

for high-quality data. ECLAC particularly supported the Caribbean countries in census data processing and provided technical support to all countries that reported census results during this period. Moreover, in-depth studies were promoted and special studies on vulnerable population groups, including indigenous peoples and ethnic groups, were undertaken. As part of an Inter-American Development Bank-funded project, ECLAC provided technical support to the countries to promote access to and use of census databases. Currently, several Latin American and Caribbean countries allow online census data processing via the Internet. Technical assistance has also been provided to Colombia, Nicaragua and Peru, countries planning to conduct censuses in year 2005.

30. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) conducted an Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses on 9 and 10 December 2004 in Bangkok. The purpose of the Meeting was to assist the secretariat in the preparation of a regional programme for the 2010 census round. In view of the importance of the census for collecting information on disability for many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, two workshops in 2004 focused on improving the measures used for collecting disability statistics through a census. For many countries with incomplete vital registration systems, the 2010 census also represents a unique opportunity to collect better data on adult and maternal mortality. ESCAP's teaching arm, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, has integrated into its annual training programme various topics related to censuses, from the perspective of both statisticians and data processors.

31. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has collaborated with the United Nations Statistics Division in a regional project to strengthen the statistical capacities of national statistical offices in the management and organization of censuses. A regional workshop was organized to exchange national experience on census management in Sanaa, Yemen, from 12 to 23 July 2003. ESCWA also organized a national workshop for Iraq on "Economic characteristics questions in household surveys" (Amman, August 2004). In addition, ESCWA has provided technical expertise and guidance to Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic on questions related to economic activity and disability which were included in questionnaires for population censuses planned for 2004. It also co-organized, with the International Labour Office, a regional workshop on "Economic characteristics in population censuses in Arab States" (Cairo, December 2003) at which a questionnaire module on economic activity for use in population censuses was developed.

II. Points for action by the Commission

32. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Review and endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the Symposium and Expert Group Meeting (see annexes I and III);

(b) Consider and approve the draft resolution on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (see annex II);

(c) Review and approve the terms of reference of the Expert Group taking into consideration the process and timelines proposed for achieving the stipulated outputs (see annex IV).

Notes

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 4* (E/2004/24 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. B, para. 2.

² Statistical Papers, No. 67/Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8).

³ Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), *Recommendations for the 2000 Censuses of Population and Housing in the ECE Region*, Statistical Standards and Studies, No. 49 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.II.E.5), available from <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2000.00.census.htm>.

⁴ See background document for the Statistical Commission, thirty-fifth session, 2-5 March 2004 under agenda item 6, entitled "Better data for better results: an action plan for improving development statistics", action 2, paras. 24-27, paper presented to the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, Marrakech, Morocco, 4 and 5 February 2004, sponsored by the multilateral development banks (African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank) in collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

⁵ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 4* (E/2004/24 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. B, para. 2 (a).

⁶ See document ESA/STAT/AC.97/L.4 of 15 October 2004 for the final report of the Symposium.

⁷ See document ESA/STAT/AC.98/L.4 of 30 November 2004 for the final report of the Meeting (unedited).

⁸ The Internet address is <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/default.htm>.

Annex I

Conclusions and recommendation of the United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses, New York, 13 and 14 September 2004

1. In light of the preparation of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme and the next round of population and housing censuses, the questions listed below require deliberations at the national, regional and international levels. The answers and findings are expected to shape approaches to all aspects of census processes. The questions are:

(a) What is a census? The Symposium reviewed the definition of a census as stated in the current version of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* and in light of experiences from the previous decade round. The current internationally recommended definition encompasses four criteria for a census: individual enumeration, universality within defined territory, simultaneity and defined periodicity. While most countries continue to conduct traditional census and some use national registers, new forms such as rolling censuses are emerging that do not necessarily have all of these characteristics. The Symposium recommended revisiting the essential features of a census to determine whether or not the definition might be revised, and, if so, in what way;

(b) What is the core set of outputs that is essential to social and economic planning? The Symposium deliberated over the importance of output-based planning for censuses and the overall statistical system. A core national data set was considered a means to obtain the necessary outputs for planning purposes, improve national and international comparability of data, and facilitate the integration of national statistical systems. The Symposium concluded that output planning is critical and that, in that context, a meaningful core national data set based on specific outputs would be a useful tool for census planning. The Symposium recommended that the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses provide guidance in the identification of items/topics for a core national data set while considering the extent to which the current United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* reflects such a set;

(c) What should a census include, and how should the content be determined? Changing social conditions and issues have led to a number of new and evolving topics being considered for inclusion and/or revision in national censuses for the forthcoming 2010 census round. Some of the key topics under consideration refer to usual residence, families, international migration, ageing, maternal mortality, and human functioning, to name a few. At the same time, the Symposium expressed its concern with respect to the overburdening of the census questionnaire with various topics and the underutilization of collected census data in the current round. The Symposium recommended that the updated *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* include a comprehensive list of elaborated census topics and provide a set of clear and unambiguous criteria that would guide national census authorities in determining the topics that applied to their national circumstances;

(d) How feasible are alternative approaches to censuses? Recognizing that we might be at the beginning of a “census revolution”, the Symposium noted that

alternative census designs and approaches, including a combination of administrative sources, household surveys, satellite imagery, and use of the Internet, are still largely uncharted territories and realized the need to outline advantages and disadvantages of such approaches. The Symposium deliberated at length on the potential drawbacks and benefits of alternative approaches. It noted that approaches based on population registers are not always feasible, given, among other issues, the cost of developing and maintaining these registers. Under many circumstances, the traditional method of census enumeration is still an indispensable, reliable option. Therefore, the Symposium recommended that the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses outline preconditions and prerequisites for adopting an alternative census design, taking into account the experiences of countries that are implementing such designs in regard to quality and coverage of statistics obtained, costs and timeliness of census results;

(e) How can censuses best be integrated into the national statistical system? The Symposium noted that a lack of integration among various statistical operations might occur at the national level. The Symposium recommended a review of the integration of statistical systems through common frames for population, housing, agricultural and establishment censuses, where relevant, as well as household and other surveys and administrative sources; and to elaborate the role of censuses as part of a fully integrated national statistical system;

(f) How can utilization of census data be improved? The Symposium identified several challenges in the area of data utilization. First, there is the challenge of education of users, the public and key stakeholders. Second, there is the challenge of enabling increased access to data, inter alia, by making those available free of charge, including on the Internet. Third, there is the significant challenge of improving dissemination by customizing products to fit different needs, through using, for example, geographical information system (GIS) technology for data dissemination and in planning census outputs in consultation with stakeholders and users. Along these lines, the Symposium recommended that the Expert Group prepare guidelines on dissemination and public relations and, possibly, the development of brochures encouraging a public dialogue and educating users with regard to what data are available and how they might benefit from their use;

(g) How can new technologies best support census operations? The Symposium considered the broad range of new technologies that are being employed in census operations including global positioning system (GPS) technology, and hand-held devices for enumeration; scanning of census forms; and GIS and thematic maps for dissemination, to name a few. It was pointed out that new technologies were not always more efficient than traditional methods. Sharing of experiences, skills and hardware between national statistical/census authorities has proved to be effective for some countries. The Symposium concluded that it would be useful to examine the conditions under which certain technologies can effectively be adopted and to what extent the updated Principles and Recommendations should address new technologies. The Symposium recommended that the use of new technologies be addressed as a priority in the programme of work of the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses;

(h) What about countries in exceptionally difficult circumstances? The Symposium considered the situation of official statistics in countries having limited

statistical capacities and experience in census operations, countries emerging from political strife and countries facing extreme poverty. It identified a need to assess the most effective ways to support countries in such difficult circumstances, especially those that have not conducted a census in over 10 years. Thus, the Symposium emphasized that the census enumeration, processing and dissemination of data in countries in difficult circumstances required more detailed elaboration and priority status in the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme;

(i) What considerations should be taken when outsourcing all or part of a census operation? The Symposium identified an increasing trend among countries towards outsourcing part of their census operations. This activity poses a challenge for statistical offices for a number of reasons entailing, for example, the fact that the interests of suppliers providing services are not always in line with the interests of the statistical office or the Government; the need to ensure privacy, confidentiality and data accuracy and to maintain public trust while outsourcing census activities; and problems related to the preparation of contracts and legal arrangements. The Symposium recommended that the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses make the review of issues related to outsourcing census operations a priority in its work. It also recommended that the Expert Group explore the possibility of providing opportunities to countries for exchange of experience in preparing legal frameworks and terms of reference for contracts governing the outsourcing of census activities;

(j) What revisions or updates are necessary to the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses? The Symposium considered the implications of its deliberations on the above topics for the Principles and Recommendations and concluded that the publication should be reviewed, updated and revised as necessary to reflect the experiences of the 2000 census decade, specifically focused on the priorities set above. The Symposium also concluded that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics should be mainstreamed into the revised Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses.

2. The Symposium addressed the roles and actions of national statistical/census authorities, the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Statistics Division and the regional commissions, and other subregional organizations in support of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. In this context, the Symposium recommended that the Commission, at its thirty-sixth session in March 2005, recommend to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a resolution on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme that would:

(a) Support the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, through a number of activities aimed at ensuring that Member States conduct a population and housing census at least once in the period 2005-2014;

(b) Urge Member States to carry out a population and housing census and to disseminate census results as an essential source of information for small-area, national, regional and international planning and development; and to provide census results to national stakeholders as well as the United Nations and other appropriate intergovernmental organizations to assist in studies on population, environment and socio-economic development issues and programmes;

(c) Emphasize the importance of the 2010 World on Population and Housing Census Programme for socio-economic planning and request increased support for this Programme;

(d) Request the Secretary General to implement the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

3. The Symposium considered the document entitled “United Nations 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses: a proposal for active involvement of Member States” (ESA/STAT/AC.97/2) and expressed strong and unambiguous support for the concept of active involvement of Member States and the establishment of a trust fund in support of the World Programme, coordinated by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The active involvement refers, but is not limited, to identifying technical expertise and other resources to be shared by Member States in the conduct of their censuses which may result, for example, in the sharing of information technology expertise; the short-term exchange of professionals; the sharing of training programmes; and the exchange of census information and data exchange, through a coordinated programme of partnership activities. The active involvement also includes the pledging of financial contributions to the Population and Housing Census Trust Fund by Member States and other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

4. The Trust Fund would be used to bridge the distances between national statistical offices in their exchange of resources and support, by providing the funds needed for travel, consultation, fellowships and advisory work, as well as for research and development of standards and methods necessary for the successful implementation of the World Programme. While the Trust Fund would involve relatively few resources, it would act as a catalyst for members in respect of their providing assistance and support to each other or sharing national experiences. The Trust Fund will be an effective source for facilitating the provision of technical assistance, with the understanding that such a Trust Fund is not meant to be the main source of funds for conducting a national census. The Symposium also recognized that the Trust Fund would enhance the capacity of the United Nations Statistics Division as a conduit for exchange of relevant information and experience and as a major repository of supporting materials and experiences.

5. In this context, the United Nations Statistics Division together with the regional commissions must be a broker of census experiences. A directory of census resources, national practices, experts and other available resources would allow countries to obtain information more easily when they need it. The sharing of expertise among countries with mutual interests, within and across regions — as is being undertaken by the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries with Bolivia and Chile — should be encouraged and supported by the Statistics Division.

Annex II

Draft resolution, recommended by the Statistical Commission for adoption by the Economic and Social Council, on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolution:

2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolution 1995/7 of 19 July 1995, in which it requested the Secretary-General to proceed with the development of a 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme and urged States Members of the United Nations to undertake to carry out population and housing censuses during the period 1995-2004, as well as its earlier resolutions endorsing previous decennial programmes,

Having reviewed the efforts made by Member States to carry out population and housing censuses as part of the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme and also the activities of the United Nations and funding agencies in support of national efforts in that regard,

Recognizing the increasing importance of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses for meeting data needs for the follow-up activities to the Millennium Summit, held at New York from 6 to 8 September 2000, the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994, the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996, and to other regional and national meetings,

Considering the importance of the population and housing census to the preparation of a meaningful core set of national data and information necessary for socio-economic planning and governance,

Stressing that periodic population and housing censuses for a country as a whole and for each administrative area therein are one of the primary sources of data needed for effective development planning, and for the monitoring of population issues and socio-economic and environmental trends, policies and programmes,

1. *Supports* the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, consisting of a number of activities aimed at ensuring that Member States conduct a population and housing census at least once in the period 2005-2014;

2. *Urges* Member States to carry out a population and housing census and to disseminate census results as an essential source of information for small-area, national, regional and international planning and development; and to provide census results to national stakeholders as well as the United Nations and other

appropriate intergovernmental organizations to assist in studies on population, environment, and socio-economic development issues and programmes;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme for socio-economic planning and requests increased support for this Programme;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to implement the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

Annex III

Conclusions and recommendations of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, New York, 15-17 September 2004

General recommendations

1. The United Nations Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses called for the revision and updating, when needed, of the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses for the 2010 census round and wished to ensure that the accomplishment of this task would occur not later than 2008.
2. As part of the planning of the 2010 census round, the Expert Group Meeting called upon the United Nations Statistics Division to facilitate the sharing of information and to provide guidance, through handbooks, manuals, newsletters, electronic exchange, meetings, workshops and the Statistics Division's web site, on crucial and relevant issues on censuses for the benefit of national statistical offices. In this regard, the Statistics Division should revise and update relevant manuals on censuses.
3. It was also requested that the United Nations Statistics Division assist the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses in identifying key statistical offices that could prepare critically needed technical reports on topics to be addressed.
4. Recognizing that outsourcing has become a common practice in census operations and in the use of information technology, the experts called for the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses to:
 - (a) Develop guidelines and criteria for drafting and designing terms of reference for outsourcing contracts pertaining to census operations, and for managing these contracts;
 - (b) Facilitate effective exchange of national experiences in this regard.
5. The Expert Group Meeting urged for the preparation of guidelines on planning and management of census process evaluation at various stages of census operations as well as guidelines related to the methodology for evaluating the quality of census results.
6. Considerable attention was given by the experts to the need for coordination and exchange of information on technical cooperation. The Expert Group Meeting requested the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses to recommend ways by which the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations organizations and other relevant regional and subregional organizations could assist Member States in terms of obtaining the necessary technical and financial support for the planning of specific census operations. In this regard, special emphasis was put on the active involvement of Member States and the establishment of a Trust Fund, to be coordinated by the United Nations Statistics

Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to ensure efficient and timely provision and exchange of services and information among Member States.

7. The Expert Group Meeting emphasized the need for Governments to ensure that the census would be gender-sensitive and that by revising the definitions, data disaggregated by gender would become available. Such data are necessary in the formulation of gender policies at national and subnational levels.

Emerging issues and core topics in censuses

8. Regarding the emerging issues and the core topics in censuses, the experts made the following recommendations:

(a) An expert subgroup should be established with the aim of reviewing, updating or developing standards and frameworks (topics, concepts, definitions, classifications and methods) for both the essential core set of outputs and the broader set of topics of general interest and concern;

(b) The list of topics in the Principles and Recommendations should be revised so as to be as comprehensive as possible, taking into account different regional and national circumstances. Fully acknowledging that not all topics apply to all national statistical circumstances and that one size does not fit all, the experts proposed that the Principles and Recommendations should provide guidance on how to include topics in censuses according to national circumstances;

(c) The revised Principles and Recommendations should include a set of criteria that would guide national census authorities in determining the applicability as well as the suitability of collecting data on individual topics through a census and also provide guidance on when sources alternative to censuses might be used;

(d) The Principles and Recommendations should provide guidance on the assessment of the level of disaggregation of the results needed so as to make a distinction between topics for which data are required at national levels and those for which data are required at regional levels and consider best practices in addressing statistical needs for small areas. In addition, the Recommendations should propose alternative sources of data as well as the suitability of the use of short and long census forms for the selected topics, depending on the level of detail required;

(e) An expert subgroup should be established to define an essential core set of outputs for obtaining the demographic and socio-economic statistics that a statistical system, including population and housing censuses, should deliver. This core set of outputs, which is not tied to any single source of data, shall reflect, as much as possible, the essential data needs of countries and permit international comparability of data based on common concepts, definitions and classifications.

Alternative census designs

9. The Expert Group Meeting concluded that there was a need to thoroughly understand the implications of alternative census designs inasmuch as there was still much to be learned. In addition, the experts pointed out that, while the alternative approaches were gaining focus, there were many countries relying on traditional

census methods, which were still reliable and cost-effective if properly applied. It was therefore recommended that caution should be maintained in the revision of the Principles and Recommendations so as not to overstress alternative approaches, because this could be interpreted by some policy makers and national budget authorities as a sign that the conventional census was no longer an efficient method. In this regard, the Expert Group Meeting, concluding that many countries still relied on the traditional census approach, recommended that:

(a) The United Nations Statistics Division should serve as a clearing house for information on alternative census designs and as a repository of metadata for reporting on shifts in census approaches;

(b) A working group should be established to develop guidelines that would help countries in adopting alternative census designs. This should include giving both the advantages and the disadvantages of each design. The work should include elaboration of minimum prerequisites for the successful implementation of each alternative census design. In this regard, the United Nations Statistics Division with the assistance of the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses should identify institutions that could play leading roles in developing guidelines for the application of specific alternative census designs;

(c) An expert subgroup should be established to review section D entitled "Uses in an integrated programme of data collection and compilation" of chapter I of the 1998 *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*. The subgroup would review statistical units and frameworks and provide guidelines on the role of population, housing, establishment and agricultural censuses in an integrated system of statistics;

(d) A technical team should be formed to develop guidelines on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes in order to ensure confidentiality with respect to the use of this source;

(e) A series of workshops should be organized on various aspects of alternative census designs, as new information became available;

(f) A review should be made of the implications of register-based censuses on the development of frames for national sample surveys.

Use of information technology

10. As part of the review and discussion on the use of information technology in national censuses, the experts recommended that:

(a) The Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses should produce detailed guidelines on the application of information technology in census operations, highlighting advantages and disadvantages. The guidelines should also provide an assessment of the appropriateness of the various applications of information technology for censuses in different national circumstances, as well as guidance on how to manage the outsourcing of information technology in census activities;

(b) In deciding on which type of information technology to apply and for which census operations, countries should carefully weigh the potential benefits and

drawbacks of each application. Furthermore, its implementation should be carried out gradually and incrementally according to a set of priorities;

(c) As there were clear advantages in establishing, among countries, an exchange of experiences, equipment, and software, including training of staff and support, in the field of information technology, the United Nations Statistics Division should facilitate such exchanges;

(d) The United Nations Statistics Division should update existing manuals related to the use of information technology in census-taking operations, taking into consideration the lessons learned from the 2000 census round and the latest developments in the field.

Promotion, usage and dissemination of census results

11. The Expert Group Meeting made the following recommendations regarding the promotion, usage and dissemination of census results:

(a) There should be future meetings to address the need to consider the merits and demerits of the use of census activities for non-statistical purposes, taking cognizance of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, with respect to consequences for confidentiality and public trust;

(b) An expert subgroup should be established to prepare guidelines on dissemination of census results and public relations, with the goal of “making value visible” in censuses. This would include, among others, guidelines on the planning of outputs, on preparation of brochures and other announcements of data availability, and on ways to improve electronic exchange of outputs. Such guidelines should also provide methods for maintaining data confidentiality especially when disseminating individual and small-area statistics;

(c) In order to increase the level of reporting of census data by countries to the *Demographic Yearbook* system, the United Nations Statistics Division should explore the availability of requisite data on national web sites and coordinate the multiple data requests by various United Nations organizations in order to reduce duplicate and overlapping requests to countries. This move would reduce the response burden imposed on countries;

(d) Workshops or meetings on usage of census results should be organized to help to enhance the value of census data by training users at different levels and with different perspectives. Such users are likely to provide crucial feedback for the planning of future censuses.

Annex IV

Terms of reference for the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses

Background

1. At its thirty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission recommended that an international expert group be formed to focus on critical issues related to planning the next round of population and housing censuses. Recognizing that the United Nations Statistics Division decennial census programme could not cover all emerging topics, the Commission asked the expert group to set priorities at its first meeting. The main objective of this expert group would be to set concrete outputs for the development of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

Role of the Expert Group

2. The role of the Expert Group in planning the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme is to:

(a) Review and ensure the updating of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, incorporating the completed work from tasks described below;

(b) Formulate an essential core set of outputs of demographic and socio-economic information that should be delivered by population and housing censuses and/or other statistical systems. This core set of outputs shall reflect, as much as possible, the essential data needs of countries and permit international comparability of data;

(c) Review and update topics, standards, concepts, definitions and methods. The goal of the Expert Group would be to update or develop standards and frameworks (topics, concepts, definitions, classifications and methods) relevant for both the essential core set and the broader set of topics of general interest and concern;

(d) Encourage countries, as far as is feasible within the national statistical context, to focus on the essential core set of outputs as relevant for censuses, and use surveys and administrative systems for other essential data, if not included in the national census;

(e) Prepare guidelines on planning and management of census process evaluation, and describe the best practices for evaluation at various stages of census operations, as well as guidelines related to the methodology (including post-enumeration surveys) for evaluating the quality of the census results;

(f) Define the prerequisites, guidelines and criteria suitable for adopting alternative census designs and sources, emphasizing that these alternative approaches are not applicable in all national circumstances. This shall include, inter alia, a comparison of the several sources and approaches, along with guidelines for the combination of different sources and approaches to ensure the scientific delivery of outputs;

(g) Review statistical units and statistical frameworks to provide guidelines on the role of population, housing, establishment, and agricultural censuses in an integrated system of statistics;

(h) Explain and provide guidelines on the options available in the use of information technology in all stages of the census process. The guidelines shall aim at ensuring the scientific delivery of census outputs, and the efficient exchange of data, including guidance on the use of metadata on information technology for monitoring purposes;

(i) Develop and facilitate international exchange and sharing of materials, resources and information on the use of information technology, so as to promote effective operations and reliable outputs at all stages of the census;

(j) Develop guidelines and criteria for drafting and designing terms of reference for outsourcing contracts pertaining to census operations, and for managing these contracts, and facilitate effective exchange of national experiences in this regard. The guidelines should also address critical issues such as privacy, confidentiality and accuracy;

(k) Prepare guidelines on dissemination and public relations, with the goal of “making value visible” in censuses. This will include, among others, guidelines on the planning of outputs, and preparation of brochures and other announcements of data availability, and will encompass providing ways for improving electronic exchange of outputs;

(l) Consider in its work (and the associated working groups should consider in their work) the related activities carried out in other regions towards the 2010 round of censuses and should make sure that the regional views are taken into consideration when drafting the Principles and Recommendations. This would ensure that the consultation process is as wide as possible, would avoid duplication and would lead to a more efficient use of the existing census resources;

(m) Coordinate and exchange information about technical cooperation, and recommend ways by which the United Nations and the United Nations organizations can assist Member States in terms of attaining the necessary technical and financial support for the planning of specific census operations, with special emphasis on the active involvement of Member States and the establishment of a Trust Fund by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, so as to ensure efficient and timely provision of exchange of services and information to Member States in conducting censuses. This shall include the involvement of agencies and donors that would be in a position to contribute to the providing of technical and financial resources to countries.

Process

3. The Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses will:

(a) Submit these terms of reference to the Statistical Commission for approval at its thirty-sixth session;

(b) Use specialized working groups and related activities of the regional commissions to decide on the technical matters described above in points 2 (b)

through (k) on the role of the Expert Group,^a and others as needed. The working groups will report to the Expert Group, which in turn will reach conclusions and provide specific recommendations for action to the Commission;

(c) Ensure transparency and cooperation in all phases of the working groups, seeking feedback from and taking into consideration developments in different regions of the world;

(d) Consider the outcome of these working groups with the aim of deciding on which recommendations will be incorporated in the revision and updating of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (point 2 (a)).

Timing

4. The Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses shall determine the timing of the different outputs, depending on the amount of work and the level of consultation needed. The United Nations Statistics Division will act as secretariat of the Expert Group. The Expert Group has requested that the preliminary planning for setting up the working groups be initiated by the Statistics Division as soon as possible, taking into consideration the need to:

(a) Provide information to Member States at the earliest possible time in regard to the work of the regional commissions and other working groups and to make draft materials widely available through multiple means, including electronic distribution and posting at the United Nations Statistics Division web site, prior to finalization;

(b) Submit the draft update of Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses for approval by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth session (March 2007). The updating of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses shall be finalized, in all United Nations languages, not later than 2008.

Notes

^a Points 2 (l) and (m) will be part of the essential planning of the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses.