

**Statistical Commission
Thirty-seventh session
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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

Item for information: Population and housing censuses

**Background document
Available in English only**

**ECA Statement on the 2010 World Programme of
Population and Housing Censuses at the UN Statistical
Commission**

**New York, U.S.A
06 –10 March 2006**



The United Nations Statistical Commission, at its 36th Session in March 2005, approved the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses and established an Expert Group to take care of its implementation. The Expert Group, in turn, proposed the formation of working groups and technical subgroups to carry out its mandate.

The ECA acknowledges that one of the main purposes the Expert Group is to carry out the revision and update of the global *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (P&R)*. The ECA further acknowledges that to carry out its mandate, the Expert group is expected to work in conjunction with the Regional Commissions and other relevant organizations in order to take into consideration processes already in place, to maximize the efficiency of the process, to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure coordination and harmonization of the results.

During the 22-26 August meeting in New York, the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses was concerned by the lack of progress and preparation at the African region level and resolved that a meeting for census experts being organized in time for preparing the report in time for submission to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2006.

Since the Expert Group meeting in August 2005, the ECA is pleased to report that in this regard, significant progress has been made since then by African countries towards engaging in the ongoing global dialogue on the role of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses in provide key baseline data towards measurement of African development.

The ECA recognizes that the forthcoming round of population and housing censuses is especially critical because of the Millennium Development Goals, which governments have embraced, and the role that censuses play in providing the necessary underlying data for monitoring those goals. The ECA and African countries recognize that at the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held at Marrakech in February 2004, preparation for the

2010 census round was one of the six action areas identified as priority for improving development statistics in the future.

Recognition is also made of the need to focus and foster the linkage between MDG related and census campaigns as the recognition of the role of population and housing censuses in providing data for monitoring MDGs was still wanting among governments and even among certain agencies.

To this end, African countries met to discuss and prepare an African position on preparations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. A willingness by African countries to participate in the 2010 World Programme on Population and housing Censuses is noted. At a meeting of African national statistical offices on census advocacy and resource mobilization in November 2005 in Yaounde, Cameroon, African countries mandated South Africa to coordinate African countries to assemble to collectively discuss the 2010 censuses and to come up with recommendations with respect to the *P&R* -- an African position -- as its contribution to the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses.

In close consultation with the UNECA and the UNSD, a meeting was held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 31 January to 2 February 2006, titled the **2006 Africa Symposium on Statistical Development: The 2010 Round of Population & Housing Censuses.** The Symposium was a modest yet significant step for the continent towards preparing successfully for the forthcoming censuses.

The Symposium was opened by the Minister of Finance, South Africa, the Honourable Trevor Manuel. The Executive Secretary of the ECA, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh attended this seminal meeting as well.

The focus of the Symposium was five-fold:

1. To encourage all African countries to undertake a population and housing census in the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses;
2. To reach consensus on recommendations on the revision of the United Nations
3. Principles & Recommendations from an African Perspective;
4. To reach consensus on core topics and tabulations of relevance to African censuses;

5. To focus and foster linkages in MDG-related statistical activities and census campaigns; and,
6. To provide a platform for comprehensive exchange of experiences of exchanges of experiences countries' participation, technical assistance, information and data dissemination.

The Symposium also considered a number of aspects that relate to developing sustainable statistical systems in Africa and addressing the challenges of statistical development and capacity building in Africa.

Out of this Symposium attended by 43 African countries and international organizations that support census programmes in Africa, came a number of key recommendations and resolutions that represent a holistically African position on census taking in Africa in the 2010 round as well as key issues and challenges that confront the continent on national statistical systems and capacity building. These recommendations can be found in the following documents¹:

- Africa recommendations on the Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses (revision 1) (ASSD 2006/01 and ASSD 2006/02);
- Resolutions of the 2006 Africa Symposium on Statistical Development: 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (ASSD 2006/03); and,
- Coordination function of the ECA within the framework of the 2010 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses in particular and restoration of leadership in statistics on the continent in general (ASSD 2006/04).

The Symposium was pleased to witness a positive trend towards a renewal of the ECA leadership on issues related to statistical development in the region. This was felt not only in the active involvement of the ECA delegation in the work of the Symposium but also by the fact that this delegation was headed by the Executive Secretary of the ECA at the Symposium.

In his address to the participants, Executive Secretary of the ECA noted several important facts with respect to the importance of statistical development in the region. Paramount to this was an

¹ These documents can be downloaded from the website of the Africa Symposium on Statistical Development at www.statssa.gov.za

acknowledgement of statistics as a valuable tool to fight poverty and extremely important in assisting to track development.

In line with the resolutions taken by the 2006 Africa Symposium on Statistical Development, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the ECA at the Symposium, has outlined the coordinating function and mandate of the ECA.

The ECA will endeavour to:

1. Be actively involved in regional and global process of strengthening population statistical capacity of member states;
2. Coordinate the regional review of a set of accepted international principles and recommendations governing the conduct of censuses in Africa and review progress towards conducting censuses on the continent;
3. Conduct expert group meetings and workshops in support of the implementation of these international principles and recommendations;
4. Lead member states to build consensus on critical issues relating to the 2010 round of population and housing censuses;
5. Assist member states, in collaboration with other UN agencies to prepare multi-pronged “Advocacy Strategies” that will sensitize and create interest in censuses among potential stakeholders;
6. Work with member states to sensitize international donors to the importance of valid statistics, gender disaggregated data, and census data in particular for the development of African countries. This will help mobilize that can be used to implement the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses;
7. Support member States in the areas of capacity building in the fields of data collection, utilization and dissemination;

8. Promote South-South cooperation and help member states to share experience and transfer knowledge at the regional level and sub-regional levels;
9. Assist member states to conduct censuses on a regionally coordinated basis, i.e. jointly conducting preliminary preparations and the training of personnel; and
10. Promote the use of new technologies in census operations.
11. Take action in collaboration with regional and sub-regional organizations and other stakeholders to help establish reliable National Statistics Systems to meet increased demands for reliable statistics; and
12. Report back annually to the Symposium on progress made in the implementation of censuses and statistical development on the continent.

The above-mentioned commitments constitute the basis of the ECA planned activities in support of the 2010 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses and statistical development.

In response to this commitment and to ensure that the leadership of the ECA is actively promoted, the meeting nominated seven countries to be Friends of the ECA. These are Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal, Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa. The meeting also resolved to host an annual four-day meeting at the end of January on a rotating basis, with Rwanda as the next host of the African Symposium for Statistical Development. The meetings initially will be mainly themed on censuses and in the near future will branch out into other areas of statistical development.

The ECA and African countries would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to the South African government, in particular Minister Trevor Manuel for the visionary leadership and commitment he demonstrated in having Statistics South Africa, Knowledge Management Africa and the Development Bank of Southern Africa to host the meeting.